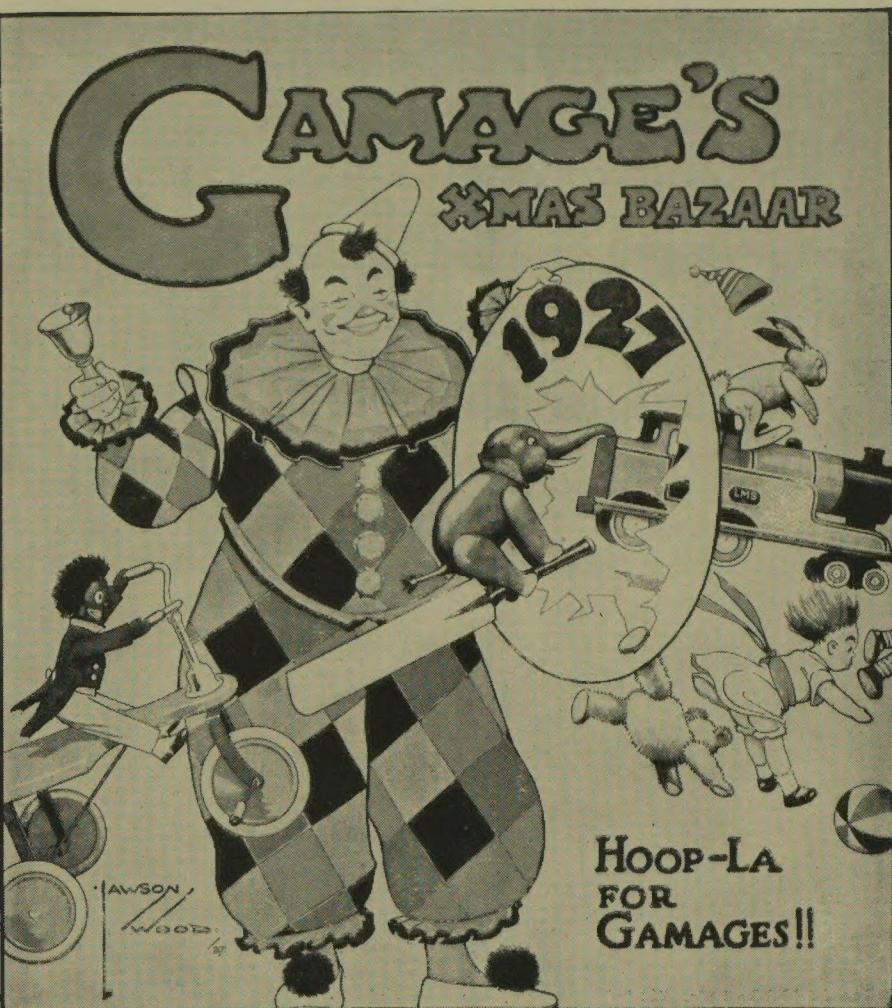


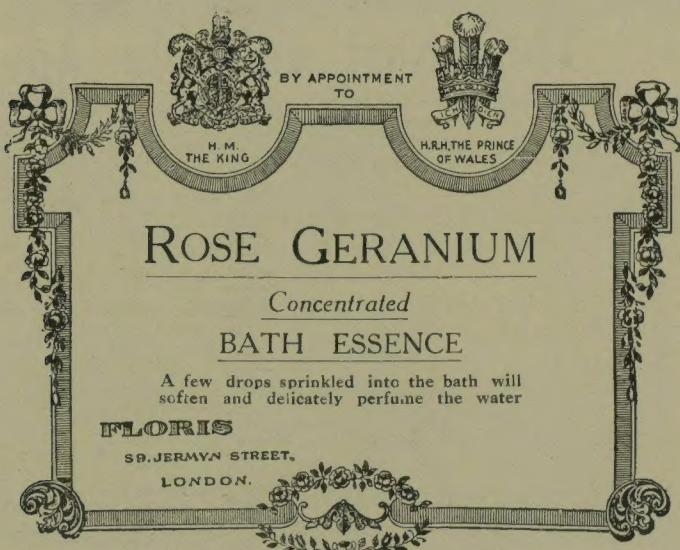
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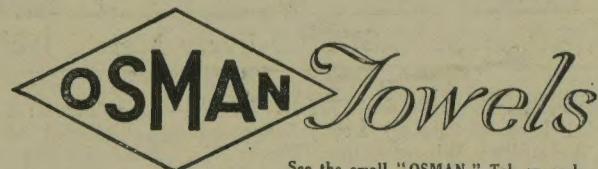
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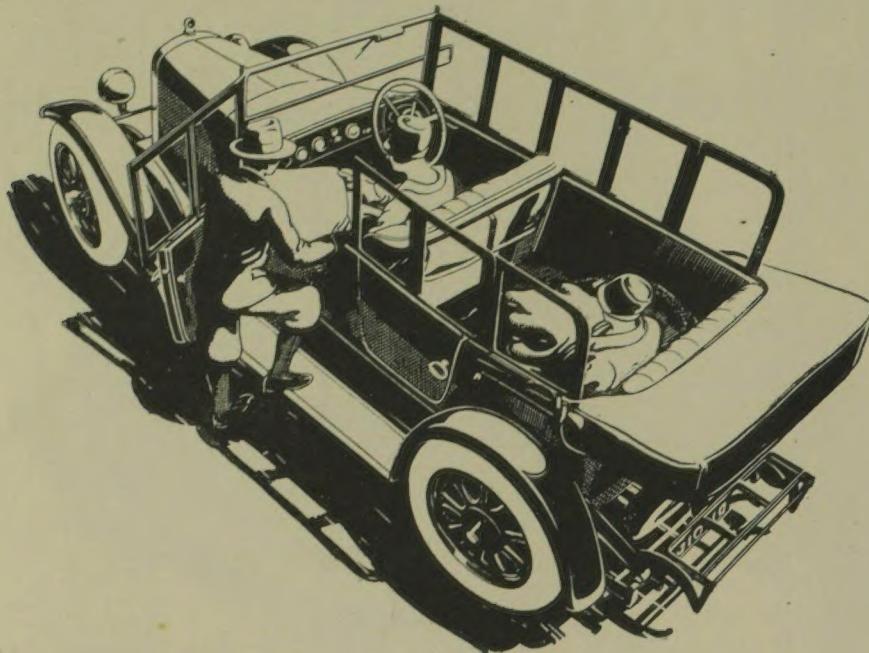
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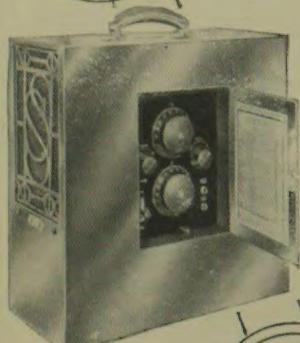
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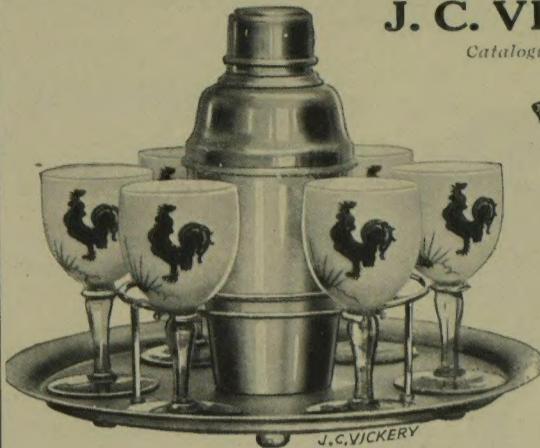
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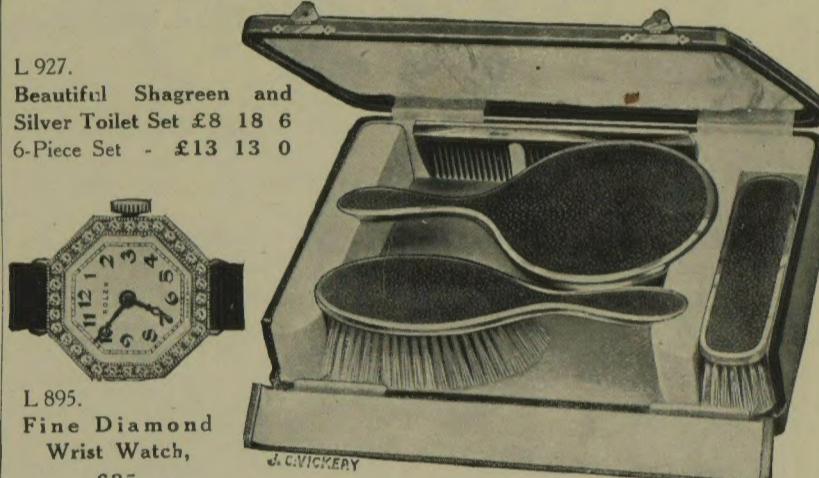
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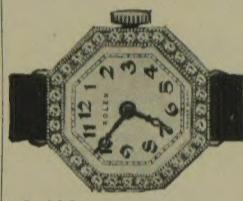
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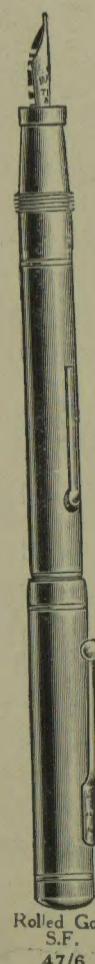


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Rolled Gold
S.F.
47/6

The Illustrated London News Christmas Number 1927.

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS.

COVER DESIGN IN COLOURS by FÉLIX DE GRAY

A cheerful winter scene as a Dutch Old Master might have imagined it, in a jewelled setting.

PRESENTATION PLATE: "HER MAJESTY." After the latest portrait of Her Majesty the Queen by ARTHUR T. NOWELL, R.I., R.P.

A dignified and lifelike portrait of Queen Mary in her favourite shade of blue.

CHRISTMAS EVE IN A CONVENT CHAPEL. A Full-Page Drawing by EDGARD MAXENCE.

Four touching verses explain the sad mystery in these White Sisters' faces.

PLEASURE BEFORE BUSINESS ON CHRISTMAS MORNING. A Full-Page Drawing by the late R. CATON WOODVILLE.

In the eighteenth century, orders of the day could wait while the Colonel savoured his vintage Madeira.

TITLE-PAGE IN COLOUR by LONGMATE: Fairy-Tales.

Christmas gift-books people the modern child's fancy with antique forms, witches, dragons, and castles in the air.

THE CHARM OF CHILDHOOD THROUGH THE AGES, as Portrayed by OLD MASTERS. Three Pages in Colour.

Page 1: Sixteenth and seventeenth-century children as Maella, Terborch, Belle, and Nattier saw them. Page 2: Children by Mengs, Velasquez, Rosales, and Allori. Page 3: Anne Milbanke (afterwards Lady Byron) by Hoppner.

THE PIGEON MAN. By VALENTINE WILLIAMS, the Author of "Clubfoot." Illustrated by W. R. S. STOTT.

A story of the German Intelligence Service in Belgium in the momentous months of 1918.

SAINTE THÉRÈSE DE L'ENFANT JÉSUS. A Full-Page in Colour.

"The Little Flower of Lisieux" as pictured by M. EDGARD MAXENCE, the well-known painter of religious subjects.

CHRISTMAS IN SOUTH AFRICA. A Full-Page in Colour by C. E. TURNER.

The season "below the Line" has only a carpet of white narcissi to contrast with the snow-clad scenery of Old England.

A FRIEND OF ST. FRANCIS. A Poem Translated from the Italian of TOMMASO DE MONTALTO. Designed by MARY H. ROBINSON. Two Full-Pages in Colour.

These mediæval pages describe eight famous events in St. Francis's life.

A PAINTER'S INTERPRETATION OF BEETHOVEN. Four Pages in Colour specially Painted by JOSÉ SEGRELLES for *The Illustrated London News*, with Notes by the Artist.

Page 1: The Master communes with the forces of Nature. Page 2: The Fifth Symphony expressed. Page 3: The Sonata in F Minor and the Symphony "Eroica." Page 4: The "Moonlight Sonata" and the Sonata "Patetica" translated into colour.

[Continued overleaf.]

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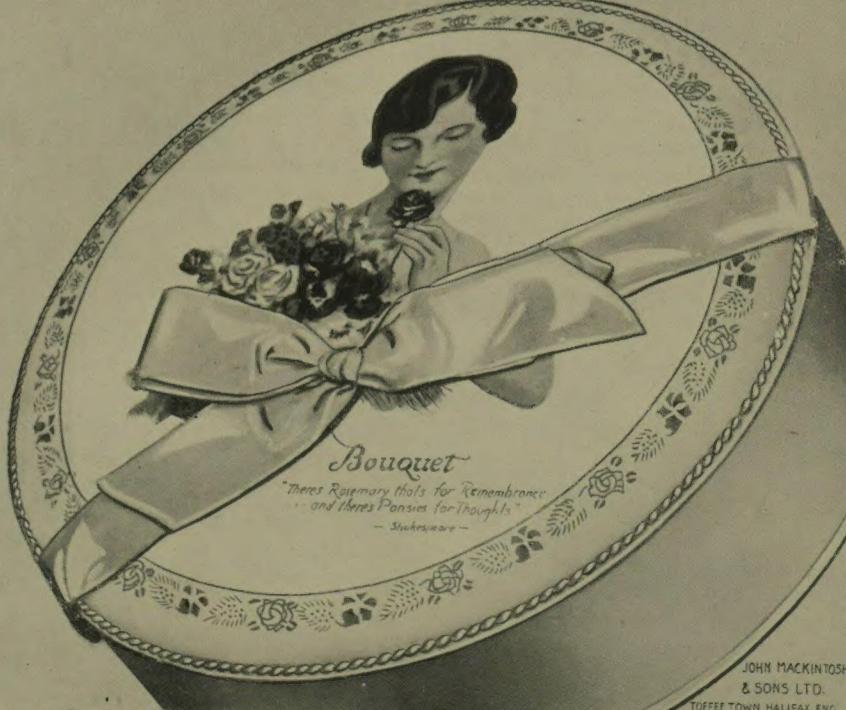
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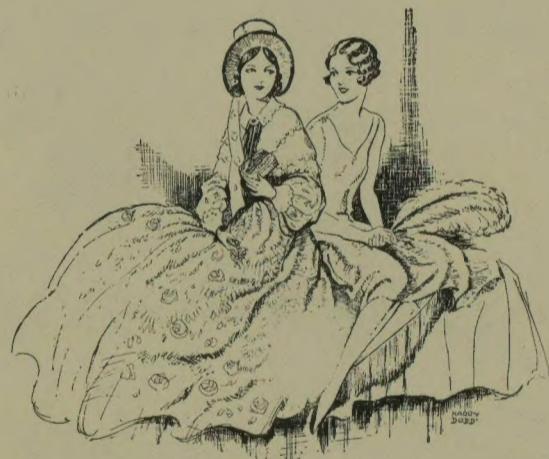


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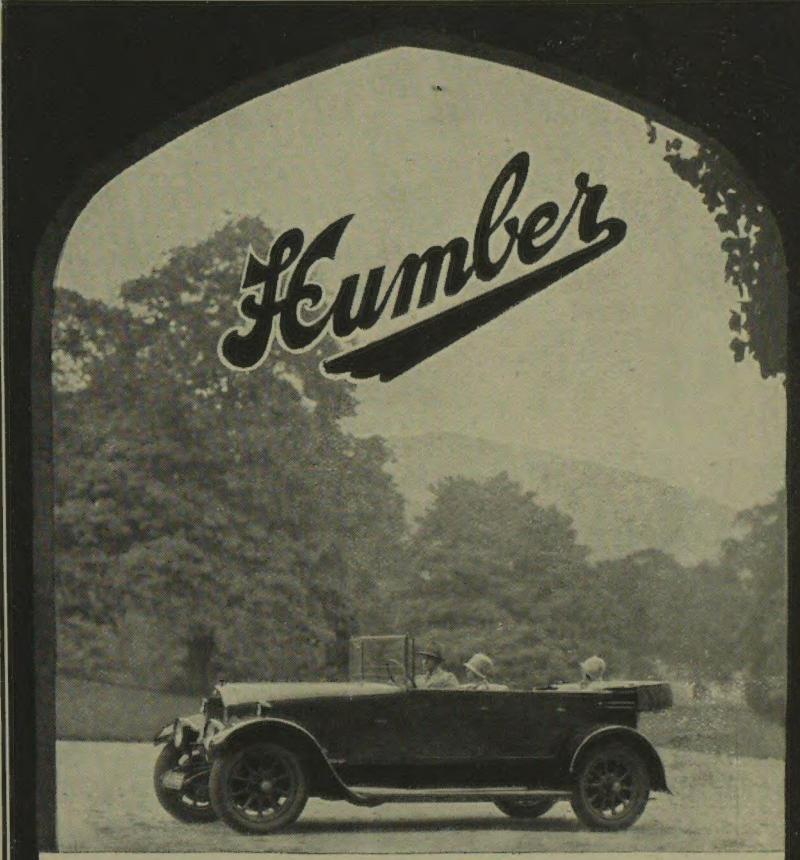
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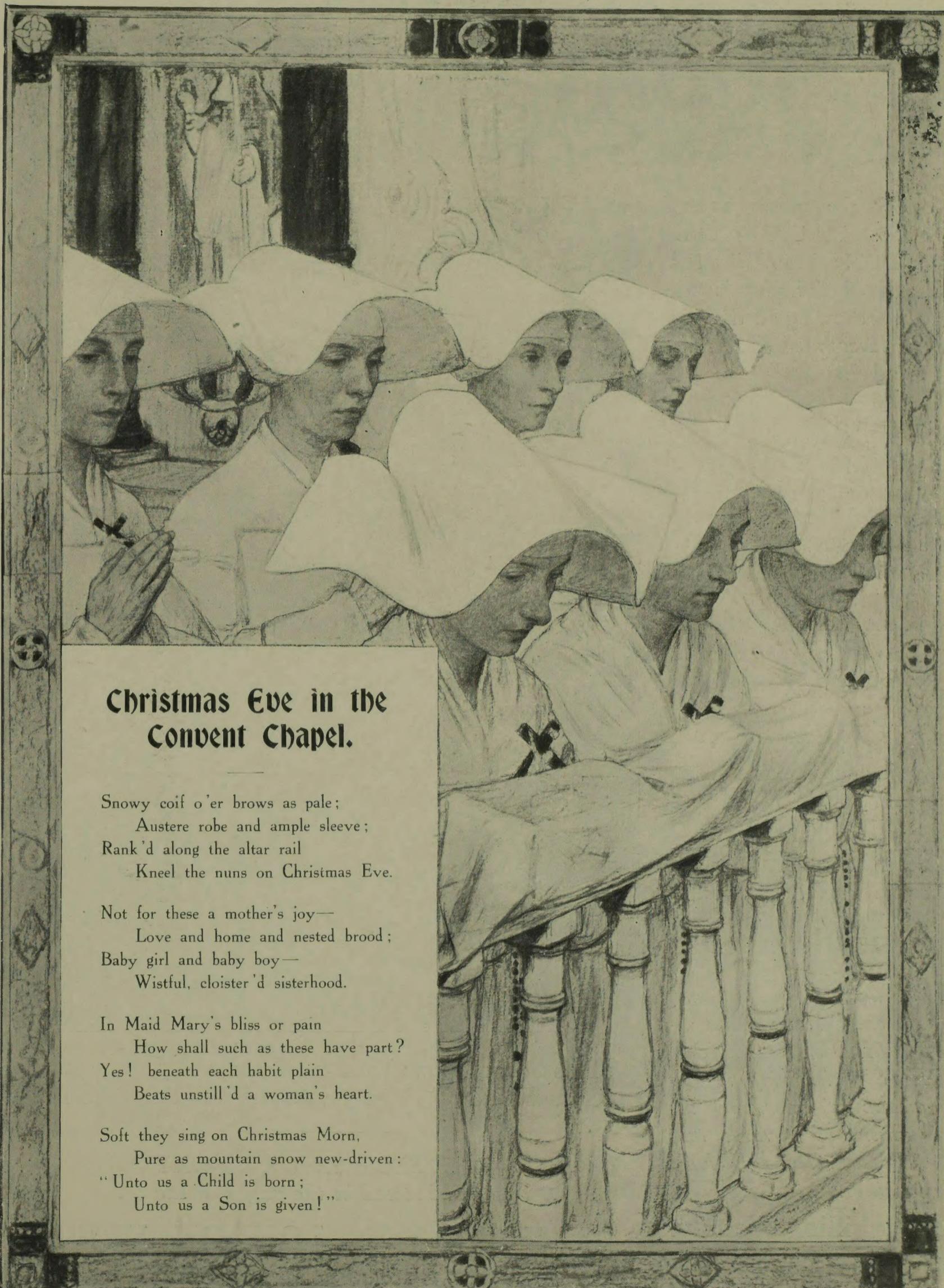


PLEASURE BEFORE BUSINESS ON CHRISTMAS MORNING.

FROM THE DRAWING BY R. CATON WOODVILLE.

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

CHRISTMAS NUMBER 1927



Christmas Eve in the Convent Chapel.

Snowy coif o'er brows as pale;
Austere robe and ample sleeve;
Rank'd along the altar rail
Kneel the nuns on Christmas Eve.

Not for these a mother's joy—
Love and home and nested brood;
Baby girl and baby boy—
Wistful, cloister'd sisterhood.

In Maid Mary's bliss or pain
How shall such as these have part?
Yes! beneath each habit plain
Beats unstill'd a woman's heart.

Soft they sing on Christmas Morn,
Pure as mountain snow new-driven:
"Unto us a Child is born;
Unto us a Son is given!"

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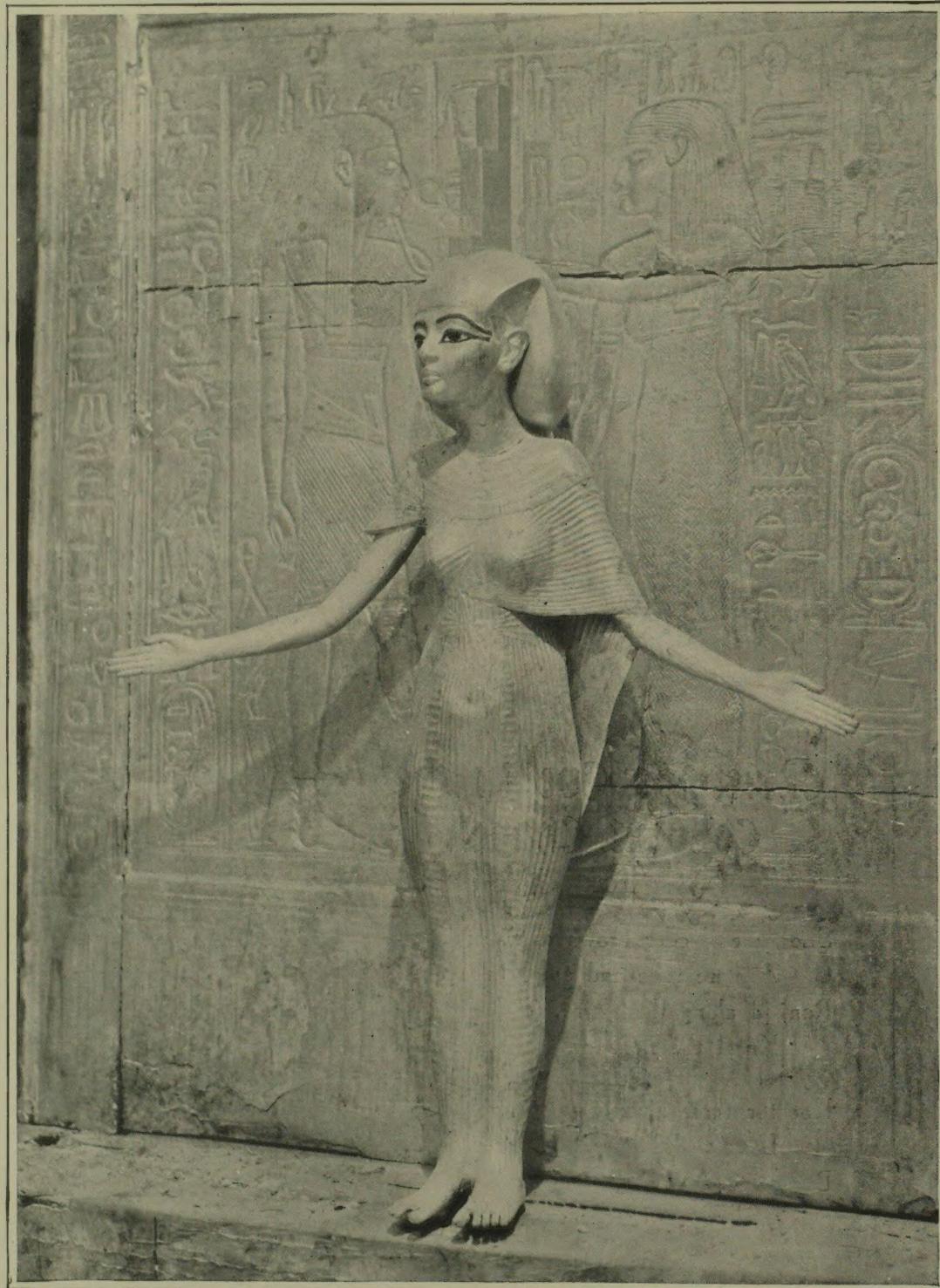
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This Picture shows **ISIS** (*Goddess of Tutankhamen's Canopic Shrine*)
GUARDING SECRETS OF THE PAST.

THE SECRETS OF TO-DAY
can be found in the pages of the

ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

CHRISTMAS NUMBER
1927.



FAIRY TALES.

FROM THE DRAWING BY LONGMATE.

The Charm of Childhood Through the Ages as Portrayed by Old Masters.



"LA INFANTA CARLOTTA," BY MARIANO SALVADOR MAELLA (1739-1819): A PORTRAIT IN THE PRADO AT MADRID.



"HELENE VAN DER SCHALKE," BY GERARD TERBORCH (1617-81): A PORTRAIT NOW AT AMSTERDAM.



"THE PRINCESS WITH THE PARROT," BY ANTON RAFAEL MENGS (1728-79): A PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG INFANTA, NOW IN THE PRADO AT MADRID.



"THE INFANTA MARGARITA," BY VELASQUEZ (1599-1660): A PORTRAIT NOW IN THE PRADO AT MADRID.



"MILLE BETHISY ET FRÈRE," BY ALEXIS SIMON BELLE (1674-1734): A PORTRAIT GROUP AT VERSAILLES.



"PRINCESS MARIE ISABELLE DE BOURBON" (GRANDDAUGHTER OF LOUIS XIV), BY JEAN MARC NATTIER THE YOUNGER (1685-1766): A PORTRAIT AT VERSAILLES.



A STUDY OF SOUTHERN GIRLHOOD: A PICTURE BY A NINETEENTH-CENTURY SPANISH PAINTER, EDUARDO ROSALES (1837-73).



"NINO DON GARCIA," BY ALESSANDRO ALLORI (1535-1607): A STRIKING PICTURE BY A FLORENTINE ARTIST FAMOUS IN HIS DAY.

The children of bygone days contrast strangely with those of to-day in costume. Despite somewhat oppressive clothing, however, the spirit of childhood remains manifest in them. Some of these pictures find mention in Mr. Haldane McFall's very interesting book, "Beautiful Children Immortalised by the Masters." Thus, of Terborch, he says: "If his superbly rendered portrait of the little *Helene van der Schalke*, at Amsterdam, be not the portrayal of a beautiful child, the beauty of the painting of the elfish antique

little body in the white dress and apron, with basket hung over arm, playing the part of a good Dutch housewife, raises it to the rank of one of the immortal things wrought by the skill of man's hands." Of Mengs, Court Painter to Charles III. of Spain, we read: "The quaint little *Princess with the Parrot*, for all her stiff air of the Court, is possessed of the charm of little-girlhood." Nattier was Court Painter to Louis XV. of France.

The Charm of Childhood as Portrayed by an Old Master.

FROM THE PORTRAIT BY JOHN HOPPNER, R.A. (1758-1810). REPRODUCED BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE OWNER, MARY, COUNTESS OF LOVELACE.



"Anne Isabella Milbanke"
(afterwards Lady Byron).

Anne Isabella Milbanke, daughter of Sir R. Milbanke, was born on May 17, 1792. She married Lord Byron, the poet, on January 2, 1815, and her only child, Augusta Ada (afterwards Countess of Lovelace), was born on December 10 in that year. Lady Byron died in 1860.



I.

FLANDERS in '18, and March coming in like a lion. With a purr that, nearer the Front, might have been confused with the thudding of distant drum-fire the icy rain beat against the panes. At the streaming window of a dingy bedroom of the *Hôtel du Commerce* a girl stood gazing listlessly into the street below. Outside, over the gleaming cobbles of the little Belgian town, the great grey lorries, splashed hood-high with Flanders mud, slithered along in an endless train, swerving from the road's greasy crown only to make way for the snorting Staff cars that, freighted with begoggled officers in field-grey, from time to time came roaring down the street. In and out of the traffic, despatch-riders on motor-cycles whirled and rattled, staying their progress with trailing, gaitered leg to inquire the location of Operations or Intelligence offices of the Corps established there. In the hotel bedroom the crockery on the washstand jingled to the din of the street.

Without turning round from her observation post the girl flung a question across her shoulder. She was tall, and the black frock she wore emphasised her slimness. Her shining red hair, loosely coiled about her well-shaped head, was the only blur of positive colour among the neutral shades of the room.

"Am I to wait the convenience of the Corps Intelligence office all day?" she demanded sullenly. At a table against the wall an officer in field-grey sat reading the *Kölnische Zeitung*. He did not lift his eyes from his newspaper at the girl's question.

"Such were Colonel von Trompeter's orders, *meine gnädige*," he retorted.

She stamped her foot and faced the speaker. "This room stifles me, do you hear?" she exclaimed tensely. "I don't mind the rain: I'm going out!"

"No!" said the officer.

"Do I understand that I'm a prisoner?"

The officer shrugged his shoulders as, stretching forth his arms, he folded back the paper. "You're of the service, Fräulein Sylvia," he rejoined placidly. "You've got to obey orders like the rest of us!"

"Agreed," she cried. "But they can trust me, can't they?"

The officer shrugged his shoulders again. "Doubtless the Colonel had his reasons for not wishing civilians to roam about Corps Headquarters...."

"Bah!" she broke in contemptuously. "Do you think I'm blind? Do you really imagine, Captain Pracht, that I don't know?"—she waved a slim hand towards the window and the sounding street beyond—"what all this movement means? Every railhead from the North Sea to the Vosges is pouring forth men and guns; your troops released by the Russian Revolution are gathering to deal the Allies the final—"

Pracht sprang to his feet. "Um Gottes Willen, mind what you're saying! You speak of things that are known to but a handful of us—"

"Quite so, my friend. But will you please remember that I am of that handful? My sources in Brussels are excellent—". She broke off and contemplated her companion's face. "Why has Colonel von Trompeter sent for me?"

"There I can answer you quite frankly," said the Captain. "I don't know."

"And if you did, you wouldn't tell me?"

The officer bowed. "It would be hard to refuse so charming a lady anything...."

THE PIGEON MAN.

By VALENTINE WILLIAMS,

Author of "The Man With The Clubfoot", etc.

Illustrated by W.R.S. Stott.

She shook herself impatiently. "Words, merely words!" she cried.

She let her eyes rest meltingly on his face. They were strange eyes, madder-brown under dark lashes. "Have you ever been in love, Captain Pracht?"

The officer's face set doggedly so that two small vertical lines appeared on either side of his thin lips under the clipped brown moustache. "Never on duty, gnädiges Fräulein—that is"—he paused, then added—"unless commanded."

"Why, then," she put in merrily, "I might have spared myself the trouble of locking my door last night."

Captain Pracht flushed darkly, and a little pulse began to beat at his temple. She looked at him fixedly and laughed. "You have a charming *métier*, Herr Hauptmann!"

An ugly look crept into his face. "The same as yours, *meine Gnädige*!"

A patch of colour crept into her pale cheeks. "Not quite!" Her voice vibrated a little. "Men know how to protect themselves. They go into these things with their eyes open. But almost every woman, even in the Secret Service, is blinded by love . . . once." She sighed and added, "the first time . . ."

"The gracious lady speaks from personal experience, no doubt," the officer hazarded. His manner was unpleasant. With calm disdain she looked him up and down.

"Yes," she answered simply.

"I have always said," the Captain announced ponderously, "that women were too emotional for Secret Service work. Especially foreigners."

"Rumanians, for instance?" suggested the girl sweetly.

"I was not speaking personally," retorted the officer huffily. "If we must have women spies, then why not Germans? Our German women have an ingrained sense of discipline, a respect for orders . . ."

The girl's gurgling laugh pealed through the room. "But their taste in nighties is dreadful," she broke in. "You must remember, my dear Captain Pracht, that our battlefield is the boudoir—"

At that moment the door was flung back. An orderly, in a streaming cape, stood there. "Colonel von Trompeter's compliments," he bawled out of a wooden face, saluting with a stamp that shook the floor, "and will the Herr Hauptmann bring Fräulein Averescu to the office immediately?"

II.

"The trouble about this job of ours, young Horst," said Colonel von Trompeter, "is to recognise the truth when you find it!"

A heavy man, the Herr Oberst, but handsome still with his fearless eyes of the brightest blue, straight nose, and trim white moustache. The blue and silver Hussar cap which, in defiance of all clothing regulations, he insisted on wearing with his staff uniform, was the only evidence that he had started his army career in the light cavalry, for advancing years had endowed him with the body of a heavy dragoon. His big form, muscular yet under its swelling curves, was moulded in his well-fitting service dress of grey, frogged with the brandenbourgs of the Hussars, and the broad pink stripe of the Great General Staff, together with the glossy brown field boot into which it disappeared, set off admirably his length of leg.

A fine blade, the Herr Oberst, with a naturally intuitive mind sharpened by the intensive training of War School and Great General Staff, a gift of lightning decision and a notable aptitude for languages.

But, more than this, he was a man of rugged character, of unflinching moral courage, and as such ranged head and shoulders above the swarm of silver-laced sycophants at Headquarters who assiduously lick-spittled to his Excellency Lieutenant-General Baron Haase von dem Hasenberg, the Corps Commander. For his Excellency, a choleric old party with the brains of a louse and the self-control of a gorilla, was his Majesty's friend who with supple spine had genuflected his

Excellency, stood by their Chief. For the rest, every imaginable form of chicane and sabotage was employed in the attempt to drive Colonel von Trompeter into seeking a transfer. In almost every branch of Corps Headquarters, save only the Intelligence, it became as important to defeat Colonel von Trompeter and his assistants as to beat the English who held the line in this part of Flanders. And his Excellency proclaimed at least thrice a day to all who would hear him that Trompeter was "*ein tahtloser Kerl.*"

When, therefore, on this wet March morning, "the old man," as his staff called Trompeter, delivered himself of the apothegm set forth above, Lieutenant Horst, his youngest officer, who was examining a sheaf of aeroplane photographs at his desk in a corner of the office, glanced up with troubled eyes. It was rare, indeed, that "the old man" allowed the daily dose of pin-pricks to get under his skin. But to-day the Chief was restless. Ever since breakfast he had been pacing like a caged lion up and down the wet track left by the boots of visitors on the strip of matting between the door and his desk.

"Operations are making trouble about the shelling of the 176th divisional area last night," the Colonel continued.

"With permission, Herr Oberst," Horst put in diffidently, "these fresh troops carry on as though they were still in Russia. Their march discipline is deplorable. They were probably spotted by aircraft—"

The Herr Oberst shook his grizzled poll. "Won't wash, my boy. They went in after dark. That explanation we put up to Operations when the 58th Division had their dumps shelled last week. Operations won't swallow it again. Hump—"

He grunted and turned to stare out into the rain. A battalion was passing up the street, rank on rank of soaked and weary men. Their feet hammered out a melancholy tattoo on the cobbles. There was no brave blare of music to help them on their way. The band marched in front with instruments wrapped up against the wet. "Fed-up," "Fed-up," the crunching feet seemed to say.

The Colonel's voice suddenly cut across the rhythmic tramping. "What time is Ehrhardt arriving with that prisoner from the 91st Division?" he asked.

"He was ordered for eleven, Herr Oberst!"
"It's after that now—"

"The roads are terribly congested, Herr Oberst!"

The Colonel made no reply. His fingers drummed on the window pane. Then he said: "Our English cousins are concentrating on the Corps area, young Horst. They've got a pigeon man out. That much was clear when that basket of pigeons was picked up in Fleury Wood last week."

"A pigeon man, Herr Oberst?"

"I was forgetting; you're new to the game. So you don't know what a pigeon man is, young Horst?"

"No, Herr Oberst!"

"Then let me tell you something: if you ever meet a pigeon man, you can safely take your hat off to him, for you're meeting a hero. It's

a job that means almost certain death. A pigeon man is a Secret Service officer who's landed by an aeroplane at some quiet spot in the enemy lines with a supply of carrier-pigeons. His job is to collect the reports which spies have already left for him at agreed hiding-places. He fastens these messages to the legs of his birds and releases them to fly back to their loft . . ."

"Does the aeroplane wait, Herr Oberst?"

The Colonel laughed shortly. "I wo! The pigeon man has to make his way home the best he can. They usually head for the Dutch frontier . . ."

"He's in plain clothes, then?"

"Of course. That's why I say the job means almost certain death. Even we Huns, as they call us, are justified in shooting an officer caught in plain clothes behind our lines."

The young man pursed up his lips in a silent whistle. "Brave fellows! Do we send out pigeon men too, Herr Oberst?"

His chief shook his head. "They wouldn't stand an earthly. The pigeon man can only operate successfully among a friendly civilian population. Well?"

An orderly had bounced into the office, and, stiff as a ramrod, now fronted the Colonel. "Hauptmann Ehrhardt is here to report to the Herr Oberst."

The clear blue eyes snapped into alertness. "Has he brought a prisoner with him, Reinhold?"

"Jawohl, Herr Oberst."



"Will the Herr Hauptmann bring Fräulein Averescu to the office immediately?"

way up the rough road of promotion under the approving eye of the All-Highest War Lord.

His Excellency detested his Chief of Intelligence. He might have forgiven Colonel von Trompeter his outstanding ability, for brains are an asset on the staff of a Corps Commander when awkward incidents have to be covered up; and Baron Haase had not been a lucky leader. But his Excellency was enraged by the Colonel's habit of invariably speaking his mind. It infuriated him that Colonel von Trompeter should have made his career in spite of his brutal candour. When only a Major, acting as assistant umpire at Kaiser manoeuvres, had he not curtly replied to the Emperor himself, enthusiastically seeking praise for a cavalry charge led in the All-Highest Person against a nest of machine-guns: "All dead to the last horse, your Majesty!" and been promptly exiled to an East Prussian frontier garrison for his pains?

Yet, although the victim of the All-Highest displeasure had lived the incident down, he had learned nothing by experience. To the Corps Commander's resentful fury, he flatly refused to curry favour with his immediate Chief by lending himself to the great conspiracy of eyewash by means of which, in war as in peace, the War Lord was justified of his appointments to the high commands.

And so a state of open warfare existed between his Excellency—and that signified the bulk of the Headquarters Staff—and his Chief of Intelligence. Only the Intelligence staff, who worshipped Trompeter to a man, less for his brilliant ability than for his sturdy championship of his subordinates even in the face of the epileptic ravings of his



Ste. Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus was canonized in 1925. Marie Françoise Thérèse Martin was born at Alençon in 1873. At fifteen she entered the Carmelite Convent at Lisieux, where "she set herself with touching faith to the practice of virtue, seeking to please her Lord. Her regard for Him was ever that of a child towards the tenderest of fathers." She died, aged 24, in 1897. "After my death," she once said, "I will let fall a rain of roses," and it was the many miracles attributed to her intercession that led to her canonisation.

"AFTER MY DEATH I WILL LET FALL A RAIN OF ROSES": THE "LITTLE FLOWER" OF LISIEUX.

FROM THE PICTURE BY EDGARD MAXENCE, ENTITLED "SŒUR THÉRÈSE DE L'ENFANT JÉSUS," IN THE PARIS SALON (1927).

Christmas in South Africa amid "Snows" of Summer Bloom.

SPECIALLY DRAWN FOR "THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS" BY C. E. TURNER. (COPYRIGHTED.)



WHERE THE SLOPES ARE DECKED WITH FLOWERS LIKE A MANTLE OF SNOW: A CHRISTMAS PICNIC IN HIGH SUMMER ON THE FOOTHILLS OF THE DRAKENSBERG.

Christmastime in South Africa marks the zenith of the Southern summer and is usually celebrated in brilliant weather. It is the season of fruits and flowers and outdoor life. Unlike the English countryside, which is muffled in snow at that time of the year or should be, according to the familiar idea of an old-fashioned English Christmas the gardens and open spaces of South Africa are at their best in the month of December. The wonderful wild flowers of the country are also in full bloom at this period, as will be seen in this study of a Christmas picnic party lunching on the flower-decked slopes of the foothills in the famous Drakensberg area of Natal. Christmas spent under clear blue skies is a novel experience which is gaining favour with oversea visitors, especially as it offers a complete change from the rigours of the European winter and opens up a fascinating field of travel in the Dominion of South Africa. It may be helpful to our readers to know that information concerning travel in South Africa can be obtained from the Director of Publicity, South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, London, W.C.2.

"Send him in! Prisoner and escort remain outside." He turned to Horst as the orderly withdrew. "Herr Leutnant, a certain lady is waiting at the Hôtel du Commerce in charge of Captain Pracht, of the Brussels command. I may ask you to send for her presently. You will not say anything to her about this prisoner, and you will be responsible to me that no one approaches him in the meantime. And see that I'm not disturbed."

Then with bowed head the Colonel resumed his pacing up and down.

III.

"As the Herr Oberst will see for himself," said Ehrhardt, rocking slightly as he stood stiffly at attention before his chief—he was a secondary-school teacher in civil life and the military still overawed him—"the prisoner is practically a half-wit. If you speak to him, he only grins idiotically and dribbles. He looks half-starved, and as for his body—well, with respect, he's fairly crawling. God knows how long he's been wandering about the Bois des Corbeaux, where the fatigue party ran across him in the early hours of this morning. According to the Herr Oberst's orders, I had advised all units that any civilian caught in our lines was to be brought straightway to me at the Divisional Intelligence Office. When this man was sent in I rang the Herr Oberst up at once. I haven't overlooked the possibility that the fellow may be acting a part; but I'm bound to say that he seems to me to be what he looks like—a half-witted Flemish peasant. Speaking ethnologically—"

A brusque gesture cut short the imminent deadly treatise on the psychology of the Flemings. The Colonel pointed to a chair beside the desk and pushed across a box of cigars.

"Ehrhardt," said he, "information of the most exact description is being sent back regularly. Our troop movements are known. The 176th Division had two hundred casualties getting into their billeting area last night. These are no haphazard notes of regimental numbers jotted down at railway stations, or of movements of isolated units strung together by ignorant peasants. They are accurate reports prepared with intelligence by someone with a thorough grasp of the military situation. The English have a star man operating on this front. Who he is or what he looks like we don't know; but what we do know is that correspondence of a very secret nature which fell into the hands of one of our agents at the Hague speaks with enthusiasm of the accuracy of the reports sent by an unnamed agent concerning our present troop movements in Belgium. You are aware of my belief that an English pigeon man has been at work here"—he bent his white-tufted brows at his companion, who was gazing intently at him through gold-rimmed spectacles. "Supposing our friend outside is the man I'm looking for . . ."

Very positively Captain Ehrhardt shook his head. "Of course," he said in his pedantic fashion, "I must bow to the Herr Oberst's experience in these matters. But for me the hypothesis is out of the question. This fellow may be a spy; but in that case he's an agent of the lowest order, a brutish Belgian peasant—not a man of the calibre you mention, an educated individual, possibly a regular officer."



The two officers watched him. He made animal noises as he ate and drank, stuffing himself until he gasped for breath.

Only a clasp-knife, some horse-chestnuts, and a piece of string, Herr Oberst."

"No papers?"

"No, Herr Oberst."

The Colonel addressed the prisoner in French. "Who are you and where do you come from?" he demanded.

Very slowly the man turned his vacuous gaze towards the speaker. He smiled feebly and dribbled, but did not speak.

"It struck me that he might be dumb," Ehrhardt whispered across the desk, "although he seems to hear all right."

"Wait!" Trompeter bade him. He spoke to the prisoner again.

"Any civilian found wandering in the military zone without proper papers is liable to be shot," he said sternly. "Do you realise that?"

[Continued on page 16]

"Gewiss, gewiss, Herr Oberst!" Ehrhardt wagged his head dubiously. "But this lout is no English officer."

"Well," said the Colonel, "let's look at him, anyway." He pressed a button on the desk, and presently, between two stolid figures in field-grey, a woebegone and miserable-looking tramp shambled in.

His clothes were a mass of rags. On his head a torn and shapeless cloth cap was stuck askew, and from beneath its tattered peak a pair of hot, dark eyes stared stupidly out of a face that was clotted with grime and darkened, as to the lower part, with a stiff growth of beard. A straggling moustache trembled above a pendulous under-lip that gleamed redly through bubbles that frothed at the mouth and dripped down the chin. His skin glinted yellowly through great rents in jacket and trousers, and his bare feet were thrust into clumsy, broken boots, one of which was swathed round with a piece of filthy rag. As he stood framed between the fixed bayonets of the escort, long shudders shook him continually.

Without looking up, the Colonel scribbled something on a writing-pad, tore off the slip and gave it to Horst. "Let the escort remain outside," he ordered. Horst and the guards clumped out. Then only did Trompeter, screwing his monocle in his eye, favour the prisoner with a long and challenging stare. The man did not budge. He continued to gaze into space, with his head rocking slightly to and fro and the saliva running down his chin.

The Colonel spoke in an aside to Ehrhardt. "You say you found nothing on him when you searched him?"

A FRIEND OF ST. FRANCIS

THE DREAM.

FRANCESCO BERNARDONE called they him
Ere he chose poverty to be his bride ;
His dreams were all of war and battles grim ;
Oft from his sleep he started, eager-eyed,
Striving to touch the spears and shields he saw,
The bright casques & the banners pranked & pied.

THE KISSING OF THE LEPER.

ISAW him riding forth in gallant weed,
And then he shrank, because beside the way
A leper crawled. Then he leapt off his steed
And ran to him, as children run to play,
His purse held forth. And then 'twas I that shrank
Because he kissed the fumbling fingers grey.

THE RENUNCIATION.

OLD Bernardone swore his wits were wild.
As many did.... I also for a space....
And when our Bishop would have reconciled
Those twain, Francesco at the Judgment Place
Cast off his scarlet : then in lowly guise
Departed, with sweet laughter on his face.

THE DARK LAMP.

UOT you, I was a tavern — haunter then.
A reveller. Francesco, passing by
One night, came in and sought us heedless men.
And said, Our Lady's Lamp is dark and dry
For lack of oil." And all our wine — stained gold
We poured into his hands, those knaves and I.



From the Italian of TOMMASO di MONTALTO

Circa
1232

THE CHRISTMAS WONDER.

THEY held a Christmas pageant, and I went
To see him play it, with his brotherhood;
They had a manger, where Francesco bent
Before a little painted Babe of wood.
But as he touched its carven feet methought
It smiled and stirred within its cradle rude.

THE COMING OF ST. CLARE.

ABOVE the Portiuncula one night
I marvelled me to see a ruddy glare;
The torches of the brethren cast that light
Upon Francesco, as he welcomed there
A breathless maid, who knelt, and wept, & kissed
His outstretched hands in haste. Her name was Clare.

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO.

THIS thing I heard, my friends, but did not see:
A fierce wolf ranged the hills by Gubbio.
Forth went Francesco on his ass, for he
Feared not its fierceness. They who saw him go
Said, "There is no return;" but when he came
Beside his ass a meek wolf ambled slow.

IN THE COURTS OF MAHOUND.

NOR did I see him standing unafraid
Before the Soldan and his warriors quaint;
But some who saw have told me how he prayed
In Mahound's courts, while they for fear waxed faint.
Now they and I grow old, and he is gone
Whom we loved well long ere men called him "Saint."

The tramp grinned feebly and made a gurgling noise like an infant. The Colonel repeated his warning in Flemish.

"Grr . . . goo . . . grr!" gibbered the prisoner.

Trompeter went round the desk and looked the man in the eye. "See his hands, Herr Oberst," said Ehrhardt in an undertone. The tramp's hands were coarse and horny, with blackened and broken nails. "Are those the hands of an officer?"

The Colonel grunted, but made no other comment.

There was a smart rap at the door. Reinhold, the orderly, appeared with a tray. On it were set out a pot of coffee, a jug of milk, sugar, a plate of ham, and a hunk of greyish war bread. The Colonel signed to the man to put the tray down on a side table. Then he turned to the prisoner. "Eat!" he bade him.

The idiot grinned broadly and broke into a cackling laugh. Then, while the two officers watched him from a distance, he fell upon the viands. It was horrible to see him wolf the food. He tore the ham with his hands and thrust great fragments into his mouth; he literally buried his face in the bread, wrenching off great lumps with his teeth; he emptied the milk-pot at a draught, spilling a good deal of the milk down his jacket in the process. He made animal noises as he ate and drank, stuffing himself until he gasped for breath.

day's work, and he had an uncanny facility at need of opening, as it were, a drawer in his brain and drawing forth a file of data.

As he helped Sylvia Averescu out of her wrap and invited her to be seated he was mentally glancing over her record. Nineteen hundred and twelve it had been when Steuben had bought her away from the Russians at Bucharest and installed her at Brussels, that clearing-house of international espionage. For a woman, the Colonel condescendingly reflected, she had proved her worth. That affair of the signalling-book of H.M.S. *Queen* had been her doing; and it was she who had laid the information which had led to the arrest of the English spy, Barton, at Wilhelmshaven.

"Madame," was Trompeter's opening when he had given her a cigarette, "I have ventured to bring you out from Brussels in this terrible weather because I need your help."

Sylvia Averescu looked at him coldly. Her wait in a freezing cubby-hole full of damp and strongly flavoured orderlies had not improved her temper. She had entered the room resolved to give this Colonel von Trompeter a piece of her mind. Yet, somehow, his personality cowed her. Against her will she was favourably impressed by his direct gaze, good looks, and charming manners. She saw at once that he was a regular officer of the old school, a man of breeding, not a commercial



"Tell me"—she indicated the tramp with a comic movement of the head—"is he one of us?"

"Could an officer eat like that?" Ehrhardt whispered in his Chief's ear. But again the Colonel proffered no remark. When the last of the food had disappeared he said to his subordinate: "Take the prisoner outside now, and when I ring three times send him in—alone. Alone, do you understand?"

"Zu Befehl, Herr Oberst!"

Left alone, Colonel von Trompeter strode across to the window and stood for an instant looking out. In the street a gang of British prisoners of war, their threadbare khaki sodden with the rain, scraped away at the mud with broom and spade. A voice at the door brought the Colonel about. Horst was there.

"Herr Oberst, the lady has arrived!"

"She's not seen the prisoner, I trust?"

"No, Herr Oberst. I put her to wait in the orderlies' room."

Trompeter nodded approval. "Good. I'll see her at once . . . alone."

As Horst went away he moved to the desk and turned the chair which Ehrhardt had vacated so that it faced the door. He himself remained standing, his hands resting on the desk at his back. With his long fingers he made sure that the bell-push in its wooden bulb was within his reach.

IV.

It was commonly said of Colonel von Trompeter that he had a card-index mind. He forgot no name, no face, no date, that came into his

traveller stuffed into uniform, like Pracht. She was flattered by the way he handed her to a chair and assisted her out of her furs as though she were a Duchess. And the Latin in her, which had always squirmed at the "Frau" and "Fräulein" of her German associates, was grateful for "Madame" as a form of address.

Still, the recollection of that icy vigil yet grated on her, and she replied rather tartly, "I don't know in what way I can be of any assistance to you, Herr Oberst." The Colonel's blue eyes rested for an instant on her handsome, rather discontented face. Then, brushing the ash from the end of his cigarette, he said: "When you were in Brussels before the war, you knew the British Secret Service people pretty well, I believe?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "It was what I was paid for."

"You were acquainted with some of their principal agents, I take it: the star turns, I mean—men like Francis Okewood or Philip Brewster, or"—he paused—"even our friend 'N,' the mysterious Unknown Quantity?"

She laughed on a hard note. "If you'll tell me who 'N' was—or is," she returned, "I'll tell you if I knew him. I've met the other two you mentioned." She leaned back in her chair and blew out luxuriantly a cloud of smoke. "'The Unknown Quantity,' eh? What a dance he led you, Colonel! I've often wondered which of the boys he was."

The Colonel's hand groped behind him until he found the bell. Thrice his thumb pushed the button. His eyes were on the woman as

[Continued on page 44.]

A Painter's Vision of Beethoven: Music Translated into Colour.

SPECIALLY PAINTED FOR "THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS" BY JOSÉ SEGRELLES. (COPYRIGHTED.)



THE MUSIC OF THE STORM: THE INSPIRED MASTER IN COMMUNION WITH THE POWERS OF NATURE.

Various artists of late have essayed to interpret music in terms of pictorial imagery, and on the three following pages we reproduce a series of particularly interesting and beautiful examples, by the well-known Spanish painter, José Segrelles, expressing in that form his impressions of Beethoven. The above picture does not represent any particular composition, but is rather a fantasy showing the master himself in communion with the elements, and drawing inspiration from the storm. "Beethoven, the

sated man of the world," writes the painter in a note on his work, "prefers contact with that light which comes from above, to blend his love of Art with the sublime power of Nature. With lingering steps, he listens impassively to the voices of the night, and afterwards creates the theme manifesting those voices to the world. Deaf, unhappy in love, and tormented in heart, he alone, through the limited notes of music, has revealed the infinite scale of sounds and visions that Nature contains."

Music Translated into Terms of Colour:

SPECIALLY PAINTED FOR "THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS"



THE BELLMAN'S DAUGHTER: AN ILLUSTRATION TO THE FIFTH SYMPHONY OF BEETHOVEN.

"There was once a bellman's daughter who was bewitched by the sound of the bells. At a forbidden hour the witches are flying abroad, all uniting with the oft-repeated theme of the clamorous bells in offering spells and potions to attract love."



HUMANITY FOLLOWING ITS FATE: A VISION SUGGESTED BY BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH SYMPHONY.

"All humanity follows its fate, some with faith, others without. It is light; it is the invisible force which drags life after it, and floats in space haphazard."



FATE KNOCKING AT THE DOOR: A PICTORIAL IMAGE OF A PASSAGE IN THE FIFTH SYMPHONY.

"It is thus Fate knocks at our door," said Beethoven once to a friend. "He knows our end, and with his thread he weaves the texture of our lives in that appointed hour."



MORTAL MEN AND WOMEN BORNE ONWARD BY FATE: A PHASE IN THE FIFTH SYMPHONY EXPRESSED PICTORIALLY.

"Thus are mortal men and women borne by Fate, that unknown power that urges us ever onward, with tears or joy, towards the end of our life which is fore-ordained."

A Painter's Interpretations of Beethoven.

BY JOSE SEGRELLES. (COPYRIGHTED) WITH NOTES BY THE ARTIST.



AS IT WERE THE BIRTH OF A SUN—A MOMENT OF SUBLIME SPLENDOUR AND GRANDEUR INSPIRED BY BEETHOVEN'S LOVE-KISS TO THERESA OF BRUNSWICK: THE PAINTER'S INTERPRETATION OF A GLORIOUS PASSAGE IN THE SONATA IN F MINOR (OP. 57) KNOWN AS "APPASSIONATA."

"Beethoven's love-kiss to Theresa of Brunswick undoubtedly inspired the great man of Bonn with that moment of unparalleled splendour and grandeur expressed in sublime musical phrases. In the sphere of art, love is, as it were, the beginning of a sun."



"NOTHING REMAINS BUT GOLDEN FOOTPRINTS OF THE FAITHFUL CHARGER AS IF TO REMIND US, 'HERE IS THE PATH WHICH A HERO TROD': A PICTURE INTERPRETING BEETHOVEN'S THIRD SYMPHONY, "EROICA," WHOSE ORIGINAL TITLE, "NAPOLEON BONAPARTE," THE DEMOCRATIC COMPOSER DESTROYED WHEN THE FIRST CONSUL BECAME EMPEROR.

"Empires, vanities, ambition, power, love, mystery—all silently pass away into the infinite. Nothing remains. But stay! There is still the memory of the golden footprints left by the faithful charger, as though to remind us, 'Here is the path which a hero trod.'"

A Painter Interprets Beethoven: Music Translated into Colour.

SPECIALLY PAINTED FOR "THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS" BY JOSÉ SEGRELLES. (COPYRIGHTED). WITH NOTES BY THE ARTIST.



"THE BEGINNING OF A LIFE, OF A LIGHT; THE DAWN OF A DAY": A PICTORIAL FANTASY REPRESENTING THE PAINTER'S CONCEPTION OF AURORA, AS SUGGESTED BY BEETHOVEN'S MUSIC.

"The beginning of a life, of a light; the dawn of a day. The solemn moments when our Sun rises majestically and tears asunder the thick veil of night, blending the stars into his glory, and raising to God the Infinite our life and labour, our possessions and our hearts."



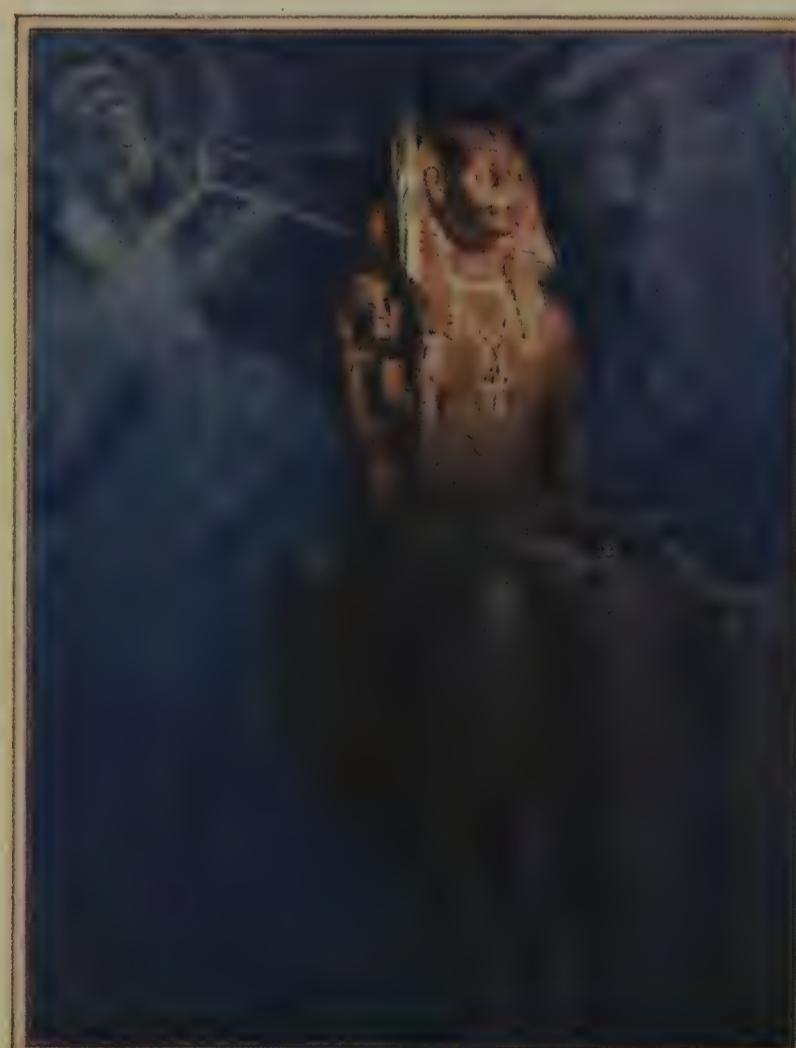
VICE PURSES THE SPOTLESS ONE, LURED BY HIS SCARLET FLOWER: A SINISTER PHASE OF THE "MOONLIGHT SONATA" DEPICTED BY THE PAINTER.

"Vice uses the mystery of night, and, in the guise of the scarlet flower he falsely cultivates, lures the spotless one to rest. Then the monster pursues and attacks her, till she perishes in the claws of Vice beneath an outraged moon blushing with shame."



"LOVE, A SUBTLE, FLEETING VISION WHICH IN THE SOFT MOONBEAMS FLUTTERS LIKE A SIGH": A DELICATE FANTASY SUGGESTED BY THE "MOONLIGHT SONATA."

"Moonlight. Love. A subtle fleeting vision which in the soft moonbeams flutters like a sigh. It is remembrance freed by the unsealing of a heart, which, like a dove leaving its nest, glides gently as a breath, to return later timidly and lock itself in the same heart. The figure is Countess Giulia Guicciardi."



"I IMAGINE THIS MUSICAL MONUMENT IN THE FORM OF A MIGHTY MAN CONVERTED INTO AN IMPOSING ROCK": THE PAINTER'S VISION OF BEETHOVEN'S "PATETICA" (SONATA IN C MINOR.)

"Strength, melancholy, fervour, and pain are the feelings which this sonata awakens in me. I imagine this musical monument in the form of a mighty man destined to remain for ever in a seat of honour and ruthless power, mutilated first of his feet and then of his arms, until he is converted into an imposing rock; but the silvered sword held in the right hand remains intact."



GOLDENFLOWER.

A FANTASTIC FAIRY TALE

by

DOROTHY MARGARET STUART.



Illustrated by ERTÉ.



OBODY in the island was surprised, and almost everybody was pleased, when the King announced the betrothal of his only child, the Princess Charieis, to Alkimos, the eldest son of the Master of the Royal Unicorns. Especially pleased were the parents of Alkimos, who had more than once been seriously

afraid that he might refuse to wed the Princess, and insist upon

wooing the fleet-footed, gay-hearted Goldenflower instead.

After the High Priestess had performed the wedding ceremony, burning spices and chanting spells while the two stood before her, linked with chains of pearls, the Master of the Royal Unicorns drew a deep breath of relief. "Let us be grateful," he said to his wife. "By all means," she replied dutifully. "We shall be the grandparents of his Majesty's grandchildren," he pointed out. "If," she answered, with a shudder, "if that foolishness about Goldenflower had gone too far, we might have had a stray mortal here and there among ours. I did not see her in the temple, did you?" "I don't think she was there," said the Master of the Royal Unicorns. "Tact or piqué?" his wife wondered. "Both, perhaps," opined the Master of the Royal Unicorns.

Fifteen years before, as mortals reckon years, a steamship bound from Liverpool to Bermuda had been driven out of her course and shattered upon the long, fierce reef of dark-blue rocks which guards the approach to the island where the father of Charieis was King. Next day, the Master of the Royal Unicorns, walking on the shore, heard a queer sound, very weird and unfamiliar in his ears. Immortal babies never cry; and here was a mortal baby, crying with all its might. The good man picked it up, and carried it to the palace, and offered it—much as one might offer a parrot or a Pekingese to the infant Princess Charieis. From that day a remarkable change came over Charieis. She had been an unusually grave and apathetic child, and her lack of obvious interest in them or in anything had perturbed her parents greatly. Now, however, all this was altered. The pretty, babbling, crawling, cooing playmate which the sea had given her soon taught Charieis to babble, and crawl, and coo. The King and Queen rejoiced immoderately. For the moment they forgot that the law of the island forbade the keeping of mortals as domestic pets. Of this important fact the High Priestess promptly

reminded them. "If," she added, "the information be correct which my agents in the world of the western mortals send me, this would be a most unfavourable period at which to acquire a specimen, in any case. The wretched creatures are in the thick of what they call the Age of Steam. They think about nothing but machinery, and money, and morals." Still, the King and Queen persisted. Could nothing be done? Deprived of her playmate—whom the whole Court had christened Goldenflower—their daughter might relapse into her old state of dulness and indifference. Reluctantly the High Priestess admitted that something *could* be done. She and her four assistant-priestesses could weave a powerful spell, and make Goldenflower into a semi-demi-immortal. Then, if sixteen mortal years passed, and Goldenflower had neither felt sorrow nor told three untruths in one day—things which an immortal hardly ever does—she would automatically become a demi-immortal, practically indistinguishable from a real one. "Only," added the High Priestess, "if she should marry, some of her children might be mortals." This idea alarmed the King and Queen a little. But they comforted themselves with the thought that they had no son of their own who might one day bring disaster on the island by falling in love with the semi-demi- (or demi-) immortal in their midst.

No secret was made of all these things, and both Charieis and Goldenflower knew all about it when they were old enough to understand. The danger to Goldenflower did not appear to be great, for she was as transparent as a dewdrop and as joyous as a butterfly; and when once she realised that, by her marriage, she might bring disaster upon the island, she resolved never to marry. This resolution she confided to the High Priestess, who applauded it, but did not encourage her desire to become a priestess herself. "It would be very upsetting," the High Priestess explained, "if you were to become a mortal again suddenly—not that you would remain one minute on the island if you did. No, child, your best plan is to speak the truth, to keep cheerful, and to snub every young immortal who seems to be getting fond of you." Goldenflower promised.

Charieis never knew it, but the first immortal whom Goldenflower found it necessary to snub was Alkimos. He had been the playmate of both of them when they were all three children. Together they had studied star-botany and moon-geography; together they had

golden race on the mountain side. In their excitement they had forgotten to stop the chariot, and Alkimos, who was then the tiny pink and purple dove, and the little earth dove, were forced to alight except out of the chariot. Charicis, who tried to persuade the tiny dove to allow her to keep them, pettishly flew in the direction of the camp, and then alighted on the wild rose, and the earth dove had flown before. Not until fifteen months later had poor old Alkimos reached the Land of Gold, and his rather better than his old Charicis. And then he had looked upon them both with a bitter regret, and had loved them equally with his original, beautiful eyes. He perceived that the case was altered the first time he came home on leave from his regiment, the Unicorn Hussars. All the young men were very keen on dancing, and Goldenflower danced like a blown petal on the wind. Charicis did not like the new step, but she merrily, but like a tame bird, did not please Alkimos, and he had rather large feet—for a Princess. This was regrettable.

Goldenflower could not help noticing that Alkimos preferred her as a partner to the Princess. She was not in the least conceited—



The King and Queen rejoiced immoderately.

and—like most really pretty girls, both mortal and immortal—she was not quick to think that she was being “consciously” admired. When once she saw that her old playfellow was on the verge of something more profound than their old

silver uniform of the Unicorn Hussars, complete with fronded helmet, pearl-fringed pectoral, and mantle of moonbeam wool. “*You, yes,*” returned Goldenflower, laughing; “*I, no!*” But in the end Charicis prevailed upon her to enter into the plan, and certainly, as they

met, kept her promise to the High Priestess, and kept it. Alkimos was disconcerted and heart-broken. Goldenflower went on keeping her promise with ever greater vigour, his conceit which was not inconsiderable—made him very wroth with her. He intimated to his father that if the Princess would deign to send him some token that he at least would be acceptable, he would set about wooing her in good earnest, but that he did not wish to risk a rebuff.

The Princess sent him a portrait of herself, with two doves on her wrist. On the back of it she wrote: “*There are some doves that do not fly away.*”

So it was settled. The young hussar got week-end leave, and spent it at the palace, and the date of the wedding was fixed. To the astonishment of Charicis, Goldenflower insisted on spending that particular week-end at the temple. On her return, she was made to promise that she would not play such a queer prank again. When Charicis had extorted this promise, she unfolded to her friend the delightful surprise she had planned for her fiancé at the ball, on the eve of the wedding. She and Goldenflower would appear in the



She and her four assistant-priestesses could weave a powerful spell, and make Goldenflower into a semi-demi-immortal.



And she had rather large feet—for a Princess. This was regrettable.

sat waiting for Alkimos, they looked charming as well as quaint. Why it was, Charieis could not have explained, but something in Goldenflower's expression at that moment made her ask anxiously, "Have you laughed to-day, my dear?" "I couldn't live for a whole day without laughing," evaded the demi-semi-immortal. "No, you couldn't," agreed the Princess; "that's just it. If you should ever feel sorrow—or tell three untruths—" "All in one day!" Goldenflower! " reminded her gaily. "You haven't used any of them up yet, have you?" demanded Charieis. "Not a quarter of a one yet." The Princess seemed reassured by this reply. "As for feeling sorrow," she said, "we neither of us really know what it is. But I remember how I used to feel when the columbines flew away. If Alkimos were to fly away, I should feel like that—only ten times worse. And I think that would be what mortals call sorrow." "But you would still be an immortal, Charieis." "I shouldn't want to be one—then." "Ah!" Goldenflower's voice was very soft, but there was a new note in it that puzzled the Princess. "You haven't felt sorrow yet, have you, Goldenflower?" she asked earnestly. "Swear to me that you haven't!" "I swear that I haven't."

As Goldenflower pronounced these words a queer little shudder ran through her slender body, and the silver fronds on her head trembled. Fortunately, Charieis did not notice this. She was thinking how pleased Alkimos would be when he saw her in the uniform of his own regiment.

In the event, Alkimos was not exactly pleased. He had a strong sense of his own dignity, and of the dignity of the Unicorn Hussars, and, though he could not unburden himself to the Princess, he could to Goldenflower. At the first opportunity he drew the lovely little

semi-demi-immortal apart and said, "What a funny fancy-dress you two girls have chosen! Great dragons and snapdragons! I hope the Colonel won't be here to-night, that's all. I wonder what Charieis was thinking about."

"It was my idea," whispered Goldenflower; and a second shudder, more violent than the last, made her silver plumes vibrate.

"Look here, you are standing in a draught," exclaimed Alkimos. "None of these palace windows fits its frame! Come out on to the terrace, Goldenflower."

They went out together, and where the setting sun touched the fountain with as pure a gold as the gold of her hair they could see the three plots that they and Charieis had had as their own gardens when they were children.

"Hallo!" whistled Alkimos, "somebody is growing columbines there again! I'm sure those plots had run to seed the last time I was here. The middle one was yours, I remember." "You gave me cinnamon and pomegranate slips to plant in it," said Goldenflower. "What happened to them?" he asked. "I had to pull them up again when I planted that fresh crop of columbines." She was trying to release her hand, of which he had possessed himself. "Don't be cross, Goldenflower," he urged. "It isn't only the little gardens that are as they used to be to-night. You are, too. Did you think I made too much fuss about that dressing-up business?" "I hope you have forgiven me by now," said Goldenflower lightly. "Of course I have. I should forgive you whatever you did," returned Alkimos, with conviction. "Let us go and find Charieis now," hinted Goldenflower. "You are angry with me, then!" "No, Alkimos." "Beware," he warned her, laughing. "No untruths! Or, at most, not more than two in one day!"

"Not more than two in one day," she repeated, in a low voice. Then she freed herself quickly from his clasp. "I must change my dress for the ball," she explained, "in case your Colonel should be there, Alkimo."

Never had Goldenflower seemed such a floating bubble of joy as she seemed at the ball that night. Her feet scarcely touched the ground, and the golden beads on her gown flickered and swirled around her as she danced. It had been arranged that towards moon-rise the whole company should proceed on foot through the park to see the house of grey fig-tree wood and rose-coloured porphyry which the Master of the Unicorns had caused to be built for his son's bride; but just before they set forth Goldenflower whispered to Charieis that she was not coming—she was going to the temple instead. "Now, to-night?" asked the Princess, surprised. "Why are you going, Goldenflower?" "For your sake," returned Goldenflower, with a queer, crooked smile. "Alkimos will be disappointed," urged Charieis. "I will not answer *that*," said her friend gravely. The Princess was pleased; she thought she understood. And she allowed Goldenflower to go.

The High Priestess was contemplating the moon from her daisy-speckled lawn when one of her scarlet-clad assistants announced Goldenflower. After the obeisances due to an authentic immortal from a mere demi-semi, Goldenflower came straight to the point.

"Oh, High Priestess, I have felt sorrow at last. And since sunrise I have told two untruths."

"To-morrow," returned the High Priestess, "Charieis comes forth as a bride. Take care that you do not tell a third untruth ere the sun rise again."

"But," said Goldenflower, averting her head, "if I should, what would happen to me—*exactly*?" "Your body," replied the High



"There are some doves that do not fly away."

Priestess, "would dissolve into a drop of dew. Your soul would pass into the body of a middle-aged spinster in the land of the western mortals."

"That dreadful land where people think about nothing but money and machinery and morals?" "Exactly." "But what is a 'spinster'?" Is it a bird?" "No. It is a futile and joyless creature, which wears strange, cumbersome garments, vast and unbeautiful." "Can it—does it—dance?" "It neither does nor can." "Can it grow columbines and snapdragon flowers?" "Sometimes—but the flowers never turn into real doves or dragons."

Goldenflower sighed. "And if my soul were to pass into the body of one of these strangely garbed unhappy ones—should I remember this island?" "Not clearly. And very seldom. Not knowing what it was that you missed, you might dream sometimes of a different world, and a more fair." Goldenflower covered her face with her hands as if the eyes of the High Priestess were hurting her. "Poor little semi-demi-immortal," said the High Priestess, not unkindly, "I know why you ask these things to-night. For the sake of Charieis." Without removing her hands from her downbent face, Goldenflower nodded assent. "Because," pursued the High Priestess, watching her, "because you love Alkimos." "No!" "Because you

fear that some day Alkimos might turn from Charieis to *you*." "Oh, no—oh, no—" The voice was faint and far away, and seemed to recede into the silver dusk.

Then the High Priestess stooped down and looked with scientific interest at a drop of pale golden dew quivering and gleaming among the close-furled daisies at her feet.

"Three would have been enough," she remarked. "Why should the foolish thing have taken the trouble to tell *four*?"



"GOD REST YOU, MERRY GENTLEMEN."

By WINIFRED DUKE.

Author of "THE LAIRD", "TALES OF HATE", etc. etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON NICOLL.

I.

HIS has been something like a Christmas, and, by Jove ! very different from the last one." Thus ran the man's satisfied reflections, while the woman's, because she was a woman, held a softer, gentler tinge. "This Christmas has been splendid, our first Christmas together; but next Christmas should be happier still, when—when there are three of us."

They sat on either side of the resined logs that blazed in the cunningly modernised fireplace; he, tall, long-limbed, handsome in a bleak, discontented fashion (a trick of nature and heredity, for by temperament he was neither); she, small, slight, a wisp of womanhood, clad in a scanty eau-de-Nil garment, swinging one slim leg to display its perfection of silken sheath and Paris slipper. The room matched both of them, with electric lamps under painted shades spilling pools of light on bizarre little tables and their litter of gay, unconsidered trifles—cigarette-boxes, bridge-markers, ultra-modern magazines—the deep mahogany bookshelves occupying the recess at each side of the mantelpiece, hoarding never-opened, immortal thoughts in calf and morocco; the grand piano, round which they and their guests had so recently gathered for a last noisy singing of "Auld Lang Syne," but ordinarily neglected on account of the greater attraction of the wireless, artfully concealed in an ancient cabinet; the blurred blues and reds and purples of old china; and the dwarfed perfection of priceless miniatures. A few of these last had belonged to Grizel, but there was no occasion to tell anybody so. Muriel, thank goodness, if a thing looked well, asked no inconvenient questions as to ownership, identity, or origin. The room, shrine for his and her particular treasures and tastes, satisfied both, and was the envy and admiration of their rapidly growing circle of acquaintances. To-night, for instance, Lady Bastable had been almost gushing over the old china.

"Give me a cigarette, darling. You do think dinner went off well, don't you ?" Muriel, curled up in a deep chair, extended a bare, scented arm.

He got up and gave her what she asked for, assurance, cigarette, and a kiss. He was glad of the excuse to bring his face so close to her small powdered one and pouting mouth. Extraordinary what a fascination she had for him, this pretty, rather empty-headed girl, who had been his wife three months. People, especially his first wife's relations, were rather scandalised at the rapidity of his second marriage; but, after all, long mournings had gone completely out of fashion, and, convention apart, what was there to wait for ? He had wasted enough of his life already.

It was decidedly ungrateful to Grizel to put it that way, for without her money he could never have afforded to marry Muriel. Muriel herself had told him, with a frankness which rather staggered him, that she would not have married a poor man. "Life's so dull without money, Hugh," she pleaded prettily. He had agreed cordially, having passed an incredibly dull time himself after his demobilisation with the rank of captain, an inadequate pension, and large ideas as to enjoyment far beyond his powers. He yawned now, in lazy thankfulness that that was all past. Before him and Muriel there stretched what both vaguely classified as "a good time." This comprised ease, travel, entertaining, and being entertained; the pleasures of a London season, when a man and his wife were popular for their good looks, capital dancing, and excellent company. The pageant of pleasure unrolled before his eyes:

Ascot, Goodwood, Cowes, followed by gay autumn house-parties. Thank the Lord he was done with Scotland. Neither he nor Muriel cared about the land of mist and legend and—to each—tragic memories. Muriel's father and only brother had been killed in a horrible accident, when their car collided with another at a hairpin bend of a notoriously dangerous Highland road. A few people remembered from the newspapers that Hugh Carslake's first wife had been drowned somewhere in Scotland. She and her husband were motoring home when the car skidded and ran into a loch. He was rescued, clinging to the roof, after he had held his wife's head above the water until his strength failed. It was a ghastly affair; but he had come out of it with credit, and Mrs. Carslake's will bequeathed him all her property. He had married Muriel Denham a few months afterwards, and, by common consent, although both were living on her money, Grizel Carslake's name seldom passed the lips of either. Muriel was nebulously jealous of her predecessor. Her husband had his own reasons for thinking of her as little as he could. His first marriage had been a glaring failure.

Grizel Soutar, as her name denoted, was a Scotswoman, not ill-looking in a red-headed, raw-boned way, but a clumsy giantess, despite remarkably small feet, compared with the fairy-like Muriel. Hugh Carslake had met her at a Northern hydro-pathic, adjacent to her own recently inherited property, a house and estate in one of the remotest glens of Forfarshire. Her father had made a fortune in jute, that had duly descended to Grizel, plus Pitduthie, which he had bought shortly before his death from an impoverished and embittered Angus family. Hugh Carslake, chafing at his poverty and restrictions, considered the position carefully. He was well born and well connected, a fair exchange for a woman whose income was derived from trade. Grizel was ten years his senior, but his war service had aged him, and she really looked younger than he discovered her to be. After a brief engagement, they were married and, as Captain and Mrs. Carslake of Pitduthie, honeymooned in Paris and Italy.

He scowled now, remembering unwillingly how badly his bargain had turned out. He had thought to enjoy the pleasures and luxuries pro-

curable only through money, and found instead that he was linked for life to a rigid, narrow-minded Scotswoman, whose forebears had not acquired wealth by wasting it. There had never been any open breach or definite quarrel. His acutest disappointment was the unwelcome discovery that Grizel intended to live for most of the year at Pitduthie. He detested the place where he had "hung up his hat." She loved every stone of the gaunt house, every acre of ground, every rock and tree and blade of grass in its bleak policies. He would have spent as little time there as was possible, but, unluckily, Grizel held the purse-strings, and he paid for brief escapes to London or Monte Carlo with weeks of fretting and imprisonment in the grey stone mansion far up the weeping, mist-hung glen. It was always raining, or scoured with howling winds. He might have found it bearable with a cheery house-party and material comforts; but his wife had few friends, and disliked most of his. She refused to imperil the old walls by the introduction of electricity, to refurbish, to modernise, so that everything remained faded, bare, and Spartan. How thankfully he had sold Pitduthie after her death; for Muriel, with a graceful shriek of dismay, defined the idea of using it even for shooting-parties as "quite too dreadful, darling." The place had passed into the hands of a war-profiter, and Hugh Carslake and his second wife,



They sat on either side of the resined logs that blazed in the cunningly modernised fireplace.

with part of the money that had belonged to his first, purchased an old mansion-house and manageable grounds in the South of England. This they had proceeded to redecorate, remodel, incidentally to ruin, and here their first married Christmas had been spent.

Half-asleep, lulled by the warmth and luxury, pleasantly fatigued after the agreeable programme of the day, replete with the best of food and wine, Hugh Carslake dropped into a doze. He was wakened from it by his wife's voice, hesitating, a little nervous.



"Last night, the same steps went past my door, and I got up to look."

"Hugh, when you bought this house, they didn't say anything to you about its being haunted, did they?"

He sat up with a jerk. "Good Lord, no! What's put that into your head, dearest?"

"I—don't—know." She spoke slowly, her eyes wide. "I—I've heard funny noises once or twice, and I wondered—"

"All rot, my dear girl." He shrugged his shoulders. "The place isn't old enough, for one thing, and with a genuine ghost the agents would have clapped on another thou, I bet. What sort of noises?"

She cupped her small, pointed chin in a useless-looking little hand. "Footsteps."

"Is that all? The wind, or one of the servants?" He laughed. "Never seen anything, have you?"

"Yes." Her eyes were genuinely scared now. "Last night. The same steps went past my door, and I got up to look."

"Jolly plucky of you." He rose, and strolled over to her. "Any result?"

She stared straight into his eyes as he leaned on the back of her chair, playing with her pearls. "Yes. All up the corridor—prints of wet feet."

Hugh Carslake straightened himself with a shudder.

II.

"Singing? Oh, waits, I suppose—or carols." Muriel threw away her cigarette and ran to the window.

It had been a real old-fashioned Christmas, with its fields lying under deep, crisp snow. As she pushed aside the heavy folds of amber velvet screening the glass and peered out, Muriel saw the white slants, pure and untrodden, and felt on her bare throat and shoulders the biting kiss of the night wind filtering through the stripped trees. Everything was very still. The singers were coming up the avenue, a party of three or four. Their voices, raised in the strains of an old carol, floated thin and not untroubling to the woman in the lamp-lit French window—

God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay—

Muriel Carslake, modern to her finger-tips, careless, superficial, felt a queer rush of feeling and emotion. The simple words, the simple singing, had touched her, bringing to her casual acceptance of Christmas as a time of feasting and jollity and exchange of gifts a hint of its deeper meaning, its immemorial message. She, whose secret was still her own,

for she had not told her husband (he would only begin to "fuss about her," or lament her spoilt season in London next summer), felt a throb of kinship with all mothers, going back to the Mother in the stable at Bethlehem. She dropped the curtain, calling out:

"I must tell Robson to bring them in. We'll give them something to eat, and money. Are they tramps, do you think, Hugh?"

"Very probably. Don't leave any valuables about, darling." He laughed as he followed her into the hall.

The heavy oak door, unbarred, let a flood of warmth and lamplight stream out across the steps. Just at the end of its shining pathway the singers grouped, three men and a woman. They were ragged, ill-clad, obvious "down-and-outs," flung together by fate's casual hand, glad of a few coppers or a meal in return for their unmeaning music. Muriel, an ermine wrap coiled carelessly round her, leaned just inside the doorway, listening to the rather raucous chant, unsoftened by distance. After two carols, she discovered that she was chilled and bored. She slipped away, telling the butler to bring the singers into the hall for refreshments.

They slouched in, their leaking boots making pools on the parquet floor, their eyes, sunken in unshaven, hopeless faces, glancing with dull envy or curiosity at the priceless rugs, the old oak, the contemptuous stares from the painted eyes of Carslake forebears, the grateful warmth of a fire of logs and fir-cones. Muriel sent them out coffee and sandwiches. They swallowed and gulped noisily, or munched, scattering crumbs. Muriel's Alsatian, coiled before the blaze, woke, and came slowly to sniff and inspect.

"He'll no hurt ye, Rab." The woman, a thin creature in a tattered shawl, with the remains of a sweet soprano, addressed a little man at whose frayed trouser-ends the dog was blowing uneasily.

"A'm no feared. Lie doon, ye great brute!"

Hugh Carslake, standing in the shadow of a tall, carved screen, winced at the harsh voice. They talked like that, Angus folk about Pitduthie.

It was stupid to care, to remember, but the accent, the few words, haunted him as he went upstairs. What a topping Christmas it had been, quite like the Christmases before the war, with its jollity and good-fellowship. His mind went over the day's events, partly to shut out the ghost of that Scots voice. He had covertly scrutinised the owner, a shambling, undersized figure, but could not recollect having ever seen him before. Poor beggars! Rotten luck some people had. He was glad that they had been sent off fed and remunerated. He could still hear their faint singing across the park—

God rest you, merry gentlemen—

Certainly it had been a jolly day. That leisurely breakfast, the prelude to present-giving and present-opening; then church (one must put in an appearance occasionally, and it looked well on Christmas Day); followed by a thumping good walk with Muriel and the dogs to Neston and back. They had had friends to lunch and tea, and a dozen guests had driven over for dinner. What jokes and chaff and laughter and toasts they had had! How proud he had been of his pretty, graceful wife, the perfection of a hostess in her tact and charm! Men had called him a lucky dog, and so he was. Very different from last Christmas.

Last Christmas he had spent at Pitduthie, alone with Grizel. He had raged secretly, for he had a dozen attractive invitations, and she refused obstinately to act as his banker. She, as a Scotswoman and a rigid Presbyterian, did not take much note of Christmas. She liked New Year (a beastly time, when the servants invariably got drunk), with its well-wishing and first-footing. Why, he now remembered she had been quite upset because their earliest caller on New Year's Day had been a cousin of hers, a red-haired woman, instead of a dark man. She had harped continuously, almost hysterically, on the probability of this bringing bad luck. Well—her husband shrugged his shoulders—her luck, good or bad, had not lasted very long, for in the following April there had occurred the drowning accident which cost her her life. He had been for so long accustomed exclusively to regard his first marriage—its failure, its disappointments—from his own point of view, but now it suddenly struck him that Grizel, too, had had her stake in it. Was she secretly resentful of the way in which things had turned out for both of them, even to his final good fortune in being the one to be rescued, whilst she had drowned? Until the last few seconds of their life together he had never really known what she was thinking or feeling.

In his comfortable dressing-room, with central heating and every modern convenience and luxury that the heart of man could desire, he shivered, recalling that last Christmas at Pitduthie. On Christmas Eve he had traversed its gaunt corridors, shielding a draught-swayed candle (the alternative to an evil-smelling hand-lamp) on his way to an enormous cavern of a bedroom, where a feather mattress and a four-poster insured bad dreams. The river, rain-swollen, had brawled through the darkness when he halted by the staircase-window to peer out. Nothing was to be seen but shapeless blackness, nothing to be heard but the voice of that noisy water, rushing to join the loch, a quarter of a mile away. He shivered violently. The loch had freed him, freed Grizel. Last Christmas, shut in with her, shut up alone with her, he had known nakedly that he hated her. It was not merely that he was tired of her, bored by her. No, he hated her.

The interminable Christmas Day passed in a procession of petty incidents before his mind's eye. He saw himself, cold and sullen, after tepid shaving-water and a lukewarm bath, facing Grizel across an expanse of breakfast-table. Her nose was red, her hands blue and chilblained. Why the devil, he asked himself irritably, could not the woman have introduced some labour-saving contrivances into this bleak barrack of a place, if she were so wedded to it? She accounted for all their

discomforts by complaining that servants would not stay at Pitduthie. The (nominal) master of the house did not blame them. He would not have stayed either, had not dire necessity compelled him. He thought venomously of other couples and their Christmas. They would be spending it dancing at Monte Carlo, sight-seeing in Egypt, or even basking in sunshine at Torquay. The porridge was cold and lumpy, the tea stewed, the bread stale, and, in place of crisp toast, those indigestible baps, which Scots folk vaunted and enjoyed, appeared morning after morning.

No parcel post, no letters even, until the afternoon. It was as bad as living on a desert island.... He had hung about aimlessly, chilled, unoccupied, disliking to go out when there was no object for a walk, and a wetting drizzle falling steadily. Lunch had been as unattractive as breakfast, and, afterwards, he had dropped off to sleep in the gun-room, a ghostly, damp hole, the sole attraction of which was the fact that Grizel seldom penetrated there. Between tea and dinner had yawned a chasm of time that seemed years in retrospect and eternity in endurance. After dinner (an ordinary, very bad dinner, no turkey, no plum-pudding even) they had sat in the drawing-room. It was large and comfortless, with the fire's heat swallowed up by a cavernous chimney, and hard chairs. They did not talk, because they had long since discovered that in conversation they had no common meeting-ground, no mutual tastes and topics. Grizel's father had made his pile too late for education or travel to be of any advantage to his daughter. She was naturally shy, tongue-tied, limited. Her husband's outlook and anecdotes shocked her. Bereft of graceful small talk, which made Muriel such agreeable company, Grizel took refuge in sewing or knitting, seldom opening a book. He was with her there, but why wear out her patience and her fingers making useless garments for a nebulous destination known as "the poor," when she could afford to clothe whole families in ready-made garments, and never miss the cost? He had gone early to bed, in sheer boredom, and remembered her coming in, hours later, wearing a longcloth nightgown which reached from chin to ground, and with her red hair, that she stubbornly refused to shingle, primly plaited. Muriel wore dainty boudoir caps, and in bed diaphanous garments showing low breasts, and arms and shoulders white and dimpled as a baby's. He had never seen Grizel's arms uncovered. Even in dinner dress she wore lace or net sleeves.

Why should he think about last Christmas, lapped round in the luxury and security of this? Was it that voice, that harsh Scots voice downstairs, bringing back the past unendurably? It recalled the voices of the farm labourers fetched to the scene of the accident by his shouts for help. They had righted the half-submerged car, after lifting with rough reverence to the bank the dank, dripping thing which had been Grizel. He sat on the edge of his comfortable bed, his head nursed in his hands, and thought. How hideously easily the thing had happened. Grizel and he were motoring back to Pitduthie from the nearest town, ten miles away. She had made a mystery about her business there, which annoyed him considerably, as he always went in terror of her altering her will. The road was a narrow track through a wild glen, with snow unmelted on the frowning mountains, although it was April, and neither bird-song nor bud to hint of spring. She drove well and steadily, until that treacherous bit of broken road, become a swamp from recent rains. The burn, running alongside, had overflowed, and was tilting down a mass of water that spread and melted into the chill permanency of the loch beyond the low dyke. He never really knew or realised how the accident occurred. The car must have skidded, of course. He dimly remembered being flung violently to one side, and semi-stunned, reviving under the icy embrace of water. The two-seater hung half over the dyke, its back wheels suspended on the stones, its steering-wheel and lamps and front seat in the loch. He had kept his head, and, inch by inch, had dragged himself up and backwards, feeling the floor under him sinking lower and lower, and the water creeping higher up his limbs. Grizel was on the side of the car that was furthest in the water. Entangled in the steering-wheel, she could not free herself. He had got his arm somehow under her chin, and might be able to hold her head out of the water until help came. In such a lonely spot, the nearest farm was a mile away. How thin, remote, futile his own voice shouting had sounded in the chill, empty atmosphere!

It was too late for her when assistance at last came. The car was nearly under the loch, and his own escape had been so narrow that even now he wondered and shuddered at it. As the affair had happened in Scotland, he was spared the horrors of an inquest, but a prying person calling himself the Procurator-Fiscal came to Pitduthie to ask endless questions. He was satisfied eventually that it was a pure accident, and nobody to blame.

Hang it! if this went on he should never sleep. It was useless to go to bed only to lie awake. He had better go down to the library in search of some cheery magazine. He opened the door and peered out. The corridor, with its frequent lights and thick carpet, looked normal, reassuring. He thought of Muriel's ghosts and ghostly footsteps, smiling contemptuously to himself. He could imagine Pitduthie haunted well enough, but not this cheery, modern place which called him owner. Pitduthie! He stood very still. Instead of engravings and mellow panelling and cunningly-placed lamps, he saw its black, forbidding passages, and wondered fearfully whether a dripping thing with sodden plaits walked those eerie windings to-night.

He pulled himself together as he opened the library door. Utter rot! Why should the dead come again, and to a house which they had never known in life? Grizel was safe in her grave in Pitduthie kirkyard, and he was here, Muriel's husband, master of Rakeley Manor.

III.

Darkness hung over the library, thick, opaque darkness, which retreated, shamed and cowed, before the assault of the nearest electric lamp. The switch clicked gently, and by the sudden illumination he saw the room, its cosiness, its emptiness. But stay! A second glance showed him it was not empty. His hand went to the bell.

" You infernal thief! I'll just lock you in the cellar and 'phone for the police! "

" Ye'd better no dae that."

Hugh Carslake, his hand on the telephone, paused, arrested by the words. The little man—he saw now that it was the one whom the woman had spoken to, calling him Rab—rose leisurely from Muriel's chair. Her husband choked with fury. The damned impudence of the fellow!

" I'll give you in charge for stealing." The leaves of the telephone book whirled in a furious search for the number of the police-station at Neston.

" A've no stolen aught."

" How can I take your word for that? I'll have you searched, anyway."

" A tell ye, A've no stolen aught, and if ye send for the poliss, ye can dae it at yer ain risk."

The master of the house stood very still. " My—own—risk? "

" Aye. A've seen ye afore, though maybe ye didna see me. Ye tellt yer ain story at the time till the Fiscal. A can tell mine till the poliss."

There was a stark, dreadful silence. The two men looked at one another, the well-groomed figure in evening clothes, the undersized tramp with rent coat and broken, sodden boots. Hugh Carslake asked slowly a trivial question to beat off the greater issue.

" How did you get in? My butler saw you all off the premises."

" Ay, but A crept roond, and found a windy open. A kenned ye'd come doon." The tramp smiled grimly.

Muriel's husband stammered desperately: " What do you want? Mind, I'm not the sort to be scared by threats. You don't know anything about me—"

The other's dreadful chuckle turned his blood to ice. He felt cold—colder than when the waters of that fated loch had crept up, and he had seen in the loch's kiss the end for one of them. The tramp grinned, showing a few yellow stumps. They were like a dog's teeth, bared to bite.

" That's where ye're wrang. A ken plenty." He trod nearer. " Yon day o' the accident, A wasna far aff. There was a wee bird—A dinna mind its name—buildin' doon by the bank o' yon loch, an' A was watching for a chance tae see it. A'm fond o' birds, but A saw mair nor a nest that aifernoon."



The singers grouped, three men and a woman. They were ragged, ill-clad, obvious "down-and-outs."

The listener sought blindly for a chair, found it, fell into it. The tramp went on coolly:

" There was a moty-car, wi' twa folks, yersel' an' a leddy. She was no the leddy o' this hoose. The car was owre the dyke, and ben the watter, and I saw what ye did."

"I—I shouted for help. If you were near, why the hell didn't you come to us?"

The tramp licked his lips.

"A thocht, for ane thing, ye wouldna want witnesses, and for another"—he hunched his tattered shoulders—"A was trespassin', ye ken, an' as a maitter o' fact, A got sax months for that, an' a wee brash wi' keepers that same nicht." He chuckled. "Itherwise, A've nae doot ye'd hae had a veesit frae me afore this."

Hugh Carslake demanded in harsh, strained accents: "Have you been—tracking me down?"

"No exactly." The tramp leered up at him. "It was chance the nicht, or maybe what ye eddicated folks would ca' Providence. A made a few inquiries at Pitduthie Hoose when A came oot, but it was sellt, and ye was awa, but A kenned ye directly we was brocht in a whilie past. Sae ye've marriet again, hae ye? Weel, weel. Does yer leddy ken?"

The man addressed shook his head. He was too broken, too afraid for bluster or denial. He had felt so secure, so safe, his grisly secret buried with his victim, and now this horror had come to betray

he sneered, "wi' yer fine hoose, an' yer braw claes, an' yer bonny wife, a' bocht wi' a deid woman's money! Ye murderer! A saw ye, wi' my ain twa eyes, haudin' her heid doon in the loch—"

"Damn you! Shut up!"

They looked at one another, each suddenly silent, awed, after the putting of the thing into words.

"It's no sae muckle what ye did, but daein' it till *her*." The tramp was staring at the carpet. "A'd been till the hoose a few days afore, an' she cam' herself, puir leddy, an' give me food an' money, an' ye droon her like a dog, juist because she wasna young an' bonnie, and ye wantit tae marry yon lassie wi' bare arms that A saw in the hall."

The man accused said nothing. This last had not been his motive, as at the time of Grizel's death he had not met Muriel Denham. No, it was the horrible, overwhelming impulse to be rid of her, the woman herself, which had driven him to the deed. He laughed aloud. What jury would believe that? The motive —his wife's money—was overwhelming. And, in any case, did the motive make the crime less black, less cruel? The scene hung before his eyes; the surrounding fields, so bleached with rain that they too looked as if under water, the swollen,



"You infernal thief! I'll just lock you in the cellar and 'phone for the police!" "Ye'd better no dae that."

him. The man might not be able to prove his story. It was his word against Hugh Carslake's, gentleman *versus* tramp; but his statement was certain to start a most unpleasant train of enquiry. Grizel's relatives, clannish like most Scots folk, close-fisted, resentful of her willing her entire fortune to her husband, would pounce upon the excuse to have the whole circumstances of the accident thoroughly gone into all over again. His skin grew damp and clammy. Evidence of what this tramp had seen—they had hanged men on lesser proofs.

Was his crime really anything more than the hastening of the inevitable outcome of the accident? Grizel could not have been saved. The men from the farm on the hillside took so long to hear his shouts, to come, to proffer clumsy aid, that she must have been gone before they reached her. He had only precipitated matters by a very few minutes in—his fear-sharpened conscience now admitted motive and everything else—terror lest they *should* be in time.

He asked dully: "What do you want?"

"Money." The tramp voiced the desire of most people.

"If I give you money now, it'll be the thin end of the wedge. I know your sort. You'll bleed me white." He saw himself followed pitilessly by this creature, incessantly demanding greater and greater payment for his silence. He might never shake him off. Muriel would suspect, question. He might talk in his sleep—

The tramp was scowling at him. "If A tellt the poliss, it'd be nae mair nor ye deserve." He flamed into weak anger. "Luik at ye,"

opaque expanse of loch, narrowing into the river that ran through the policies of Pitduthie, the sodden bank that spelt safety; the far-off, indifferent hills that framed the road along which they had driven; and the roots and stems of treacherous, resilient things, rushes, water-weeds, bog-myrtle, that afforded neither clutch nor foothold. His one idea at first had been to save himself. He admitted that now, and then in the awful silence, with, as he rashly imagined, no eye to see, no human thing to witness, the sickening temptation darted into his mind. It would only take a few seconds. She could not struggle, nor free herself. Afterwards he could say that he had held her head above the water as long as possible. He did say it.

Suddenly he became conscious of a fierce draught of wind, billowing the amber folds of curtain into the room. The French window was open, as Muriel, careless darling, had left it, and this horrible little man had utilised it to make his stealthy entrance. He must be got rid of, temporarily at all events. If the servants should overhear what he had said, or Muriel, coming in search of her husband, see him! An idea, a possibility, was insistently forcing its way into Hugh Carslake's dark mind.

"Look here"—he spoke abruptly, his heart thudding—"this is Christmas night, as you know, when I've very little money in the house, and the banks will be shut to-morrow. The day after, meet me outside the lodge gates, and I'll give you a cheque, like a fool, to hold your tongue; but it's the last you'll get from me."

"A'll no tak' a cheque."

[Continued on page e.]



"Oh, charming youth! in the first op'ning page:
So many graces in so green an age."

Muenier



THE CHALLENGE.

"For lady's suit, and minstrel's strain,
By knight should ne'er be heard in vain."



" . . . Blessings on the falling out
That all the more endears."

The other shrugged his shoulders in irritable agreement. "Very well, banknotes, then. Mind, it's blackmail. If I went to the police about it, you'd look pretty blue."

"Ye'll no dae that. Ye dinna want the poliss speirin', and they'd wonder what way ye gave me money." The tramp looked cunningly at him. "The lodge? Oh, ay, I mind it."

"I'll give you enough now for a night's lodging at Neston." Hugh Carslake counted out a handful of small silver. "No blabbing to that woman you're with, or—"

"She's my wife." The sunken eyes smouldered dangerously.

"Indeed? You surprise me. I'd no idea that folk like you troubled about legalising your connections."

The tramp's face grew darker and more dangerous. "She's as muckle my wife as yours was that ye drooned, Mr. Murderer."

of discernment in this night's blackness. There was just a chance that, as water had sealed one pair of unwanted lips, so it might serve again to lock this dangerous mouth.

He parted the glass an inch or two and listened. Nothing but a faint wind, and on the wind, thin notes of music. He strained his ears. It was the tramp singing to himself the first bars of the old carol which they had heard as he and his companions trudged up the avenue—

God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay—

What a mockery in the words!

The notes lessened until they became lost in the silence. He stood listening, listening, straining to hear what he craved for: a splash, a shout for help. Grimly he resolved that none should be forthcoming. Hark!



At the foot of the stair lay a crumpled bundle of georgette and lace. Muriel's neck was broken.

Hugh Carslake's fierce gesture bade him begone. "Don't go down the drive. The lodge gates will be shut by now. There's a short cut across the park into the fields and the high road." He spoke without glancing at his unwelcome companion.

The little man took the money, and shuffled towards the window. He halted, looking like a malevolent gnome, and then stepped over the sill. Hugh Carslake dropped the curtain after him, drew together the glass, and stood waiting. It was pitch dark outside, the moon obscured, her guiding lamp useless, the way unknown to this wandering tramp from the north. He leaned against the window, putting his hand to his brow, and bringing it away wet. He had not lied. There was a short cut, leading from the park across the fields that skirted it, and so out to the high road; but he had omitted to mention that a deep and swift stream cut the meadow nearest to the park fence, difficult, if not impossible,

was that a cry? He leaned out, but when it was repeated, suddenly realised with horror that the sound came from inside the house. The cry was his own name: "Hugh! Hugh! Hugh!"

He turned, and dashed madly across the room, blundering against the furniture, heedless of bruises, or damage to fragile knick-knacks, wrought in his haste. As he flung the door open he heard a louder scream, followed by a thud.

The great hall was dark, save for the fitful glancing of the dying fire. At the foot of the stair lay a crumpled bundle of georgette and lace. Muriel's neck was broken, and when they carried her to the luxurious bed-room from whence she had fled in her panic—why, no one ever knew—Hugh Carslake saw the print of wet shoes—a woman's feet, from the small size—reaching along the polished corridor, and halting at the bed-room door.

[THE END.]



Miss Pardew and Mrs. Thole,

By SUSAN ERTZ,

AUTHOR OF "MADAME CLAIRE," "NINA," "NOW EAST NOW WEST," "AND THEN FACE TO FACE," "AFTERNOON," ETC.

Illustrated by
STEVEN SPURRIER, R.O.I.

ALICE PARDEW told herself that it was quite true she was nobody, but it wasn't very nice to be made to feel it all day long. She didn't expect to do all the things her rich cousin Harriet Thole did, but it was a little dull sitting in the hotel bed-room every night mending that lady's clothes, while she gambled at the Cercle Nautique.

"It would be quite pointless for you to go, Alice," Mrs. Thole had said. "The stakes are high, people dress a great deal, and I'm afraid you would only feel uncomfortable."

"Oh, dear me! I wouldn't dream of going," Miss Pardew exclaimed nervously. "I wouldn't know how to act when I got there."

She had been in a fever of excitement when she first got her cousin's telegram asking her to come. The Côte d'Azur, Monte Carlo! It was like a dream. Harriet had never bothered about her before; and now to invite her, all of a sudden, to the "playground of the world"—what an amazingly kind and generous action! Not until they had actually started did it dawn upon Miss Pardew that her cousin had quarrelled with her maid a few days before, and that she was expected to take, more or less, that indispensable person's place.

"It's true you don't know anything about travelling," Mrs. Thole said, with a sort of hard frankness, "but neither did Frogg. She was worse than a child in a foreign country. I feel sure you'd rather make yourself useful than not, so, as I'm paying all your expenses, I'll let you do what mending and darning there is to be done. I never could sew myself."

It was soon clear to Miss Pardew that she was merely a kind of unpaid maid. The days weren't so bad, for they took trips and walked about, looking at the shops; but she really did mind being left alone in that little bed-room of hers night after night.

She had never known her cousin well. She had married a rich man and gone to live in London, and her relations had seen nothing of her. Mr. Thole had very likely spoilt her, Miss Pardew thought, trying to find excuses for her. She had been very pretty when she was younger, and was still quite attractive, though she would have done better to leave herself alone a little more; all this dyeing and curling and massaging made a woman look so hard.

Miss Pardew let herself entirely alone. She merely covered her body as cheaply as possible, and hoped people would know she was a lady by the way she spoke and behaved. She was plump, dowdy, and eager to please; but at the same time she had no intention of being "put upon," and had a watchful eye for a slight or insult. Ten years ago, at thirty-six, she had been about to marry a widower, a bank clerk in Rochdale, where she lived; but a month before the wedding he had been removed from her by a younger, prettier woman. It was her one "offer," her first and last, and this experience had left her with a permanent wound. Her full blue eyes looked a little indignantly upon the world, and she seemed to be asking it what it was going to do to her next.

Mrs. Thole thought she looked like a broody hen thrown suddenly off the nest. She was one of those women who, if there be someone about who is extremely easy to bully, will bully them, just a little. It gave her a feeling of superiority, and kept her in a good temper. She liked going off to the Cercle Nautique in her best black sequin evening dress, leaving Miss Pardew sitting over a book, or some mending. Mrs. Thole had always longed to gamble at Monte Carlo, and now, for the first time in her life, she was doing it, and the fact that Miss Pardew would have looked out of place and ridiculous there enhanced her own satisfaction. But there was no real enmity between them until the affair of the buckle.

Miss Pardew had made up her mind that if she saw something she liked for forty or fifty francs, she would buy it as a souvenir of Monte Carlo. When her eye fell on a curious and interesting-looking buckle in an antique shop one day, she knew it at once for the thing she wanted. Everything on the tray was forty francs, a card informed her, so she didn't even have to ask the price. She thought, with satisfaction, that she could now spend ten francs on some little toy for poor Janet Hopkins's little girl. She waited while Mrs. Thole talked to the shopkeeper in her hard,

uncompromising French, about a cornelian necklace. When at length she could get in a word on her own account, she held up the buckle and said: "I'd like to have this."

"That's pretty," said Harriet, and took it from her to examine it. "Quite pretty." She spoke to the shopkeeper, gave him the buckle, and asked him to wrap it up with the necklace.

"Oh, Harriet!" exclaimed Miss Pardew, overcome. She thought Mrs. Thole had bought it for her.

"It will do very nicely for the belt of my brown kasha," said Mrs. Thole. "I've been looking for a buckle like that for days."

Miss Pardew could hardly believe her ears. It was almost as if Mrs. Thole had stolen the buckle. It was as good as hers . . . she had practically bought it . . . she was horrified, shocked, and wounded. And because she had once been so bitterly disappointed; because she led a cramped, repressed, unhappy existence, the thing assumed enormous proportions; she could think of nothing else; and Harriet became in her eyes a hard, cruel, selfish woman . . . a devil.

But she would never have said a word against her, she would never have been disloyal, but for the presence of Sir Beverly Erskine.

He was staying in their hotel. He had gone up and down in the lift with them several times, and one day said good-morning. After that they spoke whenever they met. He was staying in Monte, he said, for a couple of months. Delightful place, wasn't it? Perfectly ripping. He was slight, not more than thirty-three or four, and there was something very boyish and pleasing about him. He had a small moustache and a ready smile, and the moment she saw him, Miss Pardew was aware of a certain "going out" of the feelings toward him. It was very rarely that she felt motherly, but now she knew she did. He was so agreeable and friendly. She had known very few men, and on the whole she was disposed to like them better than women. Women she didn't know frightened her; men she didn't know made her feel a member, at least, of a charming and interesting sex. And this man, though he looked, of course, mostly at Mrs. Thole, when he did look at her, looked very pleasantly.

Mrs. Thole was forty-nine, and, in Miss Pardew's opinion, ought to have known better, especially with Mr. Thole dead only a year and a half; but it was quite evident that she was thrilled by this encounter. The combination of Sir, Beverly, and Erskine, together with youth and good looks, was entirely too much for her; also Sir Beverly was a bachelor, and, from his accounts of the sums he lost gambling, rich. His marked liking for Mrs. Thole was soon apparent to both ladies, and affected them in different ways. It went straight to Mrs. Thole's head, and it disgusted and alarmed Miss Pardew. It alarmed her on Sir Beverly's account. She had heard of the infatuations young men sometimes had for older women, and here, obviously, was a case of it. Of course, there was no telling what Harriet had *done* or *said* to lead him on; these were mysteries, as far as Miss Pardew was concerned, as dark and unknowable as pagan rites. Certain things went on between the sexes; certain things were said, looked, done, to bring about what Harriet Thole had brought about; but how or what she had no idea.

Certainly the young man had attached himself to the widow, and Miss Pardew was more alone than ever. Indignation swelled in her heart. That young man ought to be told a few things; he ought to be told that Harriet Thole was a good fifteen years older than he was; he ought to be told what a hard, mean, unlovely character she had; he ought to be told that she dyed her hair and had to have massage every day of her life to keep her figure down. All this sun and freedom, the romance of the Côte d'Azur, had blinded him to the facts, Miss Pardew thought, trying to make excuses for him. A young man like that, a baronet, ought to be able to marry anybody. And with his name. Harriet had thrown some occult spell. She was a dangerous woman. She wanted to be Lady Erskine, and she didn't care what means she employed to bring it about.

Miss Pardew, the affair of the buckle still rankling and festering, lonely, suspicious, and genuinely concerned for the young man, made up her mind to speak, and speak frankly.

Mrs. Thole was dressing to go out to lunch with him the next day,

and various things delayed her. Alice Pardew fetched and carried for her, hooked this and buttoned that, and still Mrs. Thole was not ready.

"Just run down and tell him I'll be there in fifteen minutes," she said; and off Miss Pardew went. No wonder she couldn't get ready; her shoes were too tight; her stays were too tight; her dress too elaborate; she had too many hats to choose from; it took her a good half-hour to make up her face. Miss Pardew found the young man in the hall.

"Mrs. Thole will be fifteen minutes late, I'm afraid," she said, looking at him almost affectionately out of her prominent blue eyes. "Some people have so much to do, haven't they? A bit of powder here, a bit of rouge there; 'Where's the eyebrow pencil gone to?' 'There, I've broken my stay-lace!'"

Her face flushed as she spoke. She had never mentioned stays to a man before.

"Oh, well, there's no great hurry," he said; but she noticed that he was fidgeting nervously; fidgeting with his tie, with his hat, with his cigarette. She was certain that he meant to propose, and to-day. She thought: "He's only a boy. What can I do to save him?"

"It's been very nice for my cousin, finding you here," she said, pleasantly. "Women of our age—only, of course, Harriet's older than I am—don't often get a charming young man to go about with. There, how bold you'll think me! If I'm ever born again, and there are people, you know, who say we will be, I'd like to be a young man like you, born into a good family, and with a title—how lovely it must be!"

"Oh, it has its advantages, no doubt," said Sir Beverly, adjusting his tie. "Only, dammit, one ought to have the money to go with it. Not that I'm poor," he hastened to add, "but you can't have a bit of a fling on my income without running into debt. I'm just about fed up. That's why I came to this b—y hotel, instead of going to the Metropole."

Miss Pardew had never heard anyone say "b—y" before, and she was rather thrilled. These young aristocrats didn't mince their words.

"If you hadn't come here," she said, "you wouldn't have met my cousin." She added darkly. "Not that I don't think it would have been just as well. This is quite between you and me, Sir Beverly."

"Oh, I dunno," he said. "She seems a good-hearted sort."

Miss Pardew thought he looked tired, haggard, worried. There were deep lines about his mouth and under his eyes. She knew that he gambled every night, but so did Harriet, and she was inclined to think that his worn appearance had something to do with his love affair. Bitterly, she thought: "If you only knew it, you needn't worry. She made up her mind to have you the moment she laid eyes on you."

"Of course, you don't know my cousin very well," she suggested gently. "How could you on such a short acquaintance? I always think, a word to the wise, don't you? I'm sure you'll understand me when I say a little caution might be an excellent thing."

His eyes slid round to hers with an odd look in them.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, my dear boy—may I call you that?—it takes a long time really to know anyone. A long, long time. I don't want to tell tales out of school, but, oh! I wish you knew Mrs. Thole better than you do! Now, just let me tell you a little incident . . ."

She told him the affair of the buckle. When she had finished, he said:

"God! Isn't she ever coming!"

He hadn't even been listening. Just then, Mrs. Thole, her full figure oscillating as she came, hurried down the stairs.

"Do forgive me, Sir Beverly. I know I'm shockingly late, but never mind. We shall both have marvellous appetites. Good-bye, Alice dear. I should go out after lunch, if I were you. It's such a nice day."

Alice dear! It was the first time Harriet had ever called her that—and it was simply and solely because the young man was there. Horrid! thought Miss Pardew, really horrid! So insincere; so hollow. And what would the young man think, after the things she had just been saying to him about Harriet? That she was a mean old cat. She went up to her room with tears of mortification in her eyes. She hadn't meant to be mean. She wasn't trying to get a petty revenge for all the small humiliations she had had to suffer. She just wanted to save that young

man from himself—and from a scheming, middle-aged woman. It seemed absurd when one came to think of it, but she was *sorry* for that young man. Yes, sorry for him. She didn't really know why. She had better keep her pity for herself, she supposed.

After lunch she went out for a short walk. Trudging along toward Monaco, breathing heavily, for she was a bad walker, she saw a car flash past with Mrs. Thole and Sir Beverly sitting in the back seat. And sitting close together. A kind of rage filled Miss Pardew's heart. She'd cast a spell over that young man . . . she'd hypnotised him. She wished she'd spoken more plainly that morning. She made up her mind that she'd save him somehow, by hook or crook. Harriet had had her life; that young man's was still before him.

"Why, he could marry anybody," thought Miss Pardew. "Anybody. I wish I knew how she'd done it."

Mrs. Thole returned in time to dress for dinner. She was highly elated, and her face was flushed.

"Now help me get into my black jet evening gown, Alice, like a good soul," she said. "I'm dining with Sir Beverly at the Metropole, and I mustn't be late again."

"If that young man's lost as much money gambling as he says he has," remarked Miss Pardew, with astonishing boldness, "I don't see how he can pay for all these lunches and dinners. He'll be ruined."

Mrs. Thole looked sharply at her.

"I think you had better mind your own affairs, Alice," she said briskly. "I didn't ask you to come here to chaperon me, or to make comments on what I do. So please remember that in future."

"You asked me as a kind of unpaid lady's maid," answered Miss Pardew, astonished at her own daring, "and I know it perfectly well. But even maids take liberties at times, and I just want to say that I think you'd better take care. You think you know all about that young man. You think just because he calls himself Sir, that he's quite respectable. Well, I'm not so sure."

"What do you mean?" demanded Mrs. Thole. "How dare you make insinuations of that sort! You know nothing about him."

"Neither do you," retorted Miss Pardew. "That's why I say you'd better be careful."

The two ladies were both angry, and their eyes flashed at one another. Mrs. Thole, however, looked a little frightened, and Miss Pardew saw that her words had had an effect, and pressed her advantage.

"Young men in debt will do queer things, sometimes," she said darkly. "They'll even marry people old enough to be their mothers, if they've got money."

"I am not old enough to be his mother," replied Mrs. Thole, keeping her temper admirably, "and he doesn't know whether I've got money or whether I haven't. We've never discussed how much money I have. I don't want to quarrel with you, Alice, but if you say any more, I shall. Please fetch me my

black dress, and put this coat and hat away. Now, not another word."

"I tell you there's something queer about him," said Miss Pardew, as she did as she was bidden. "It wouldn't surprise me," she said, from the depths of the cupboard, "if he wasn't Sir Beverly Erskine at all."

Mrs. Thole glared at her, but made no reply.

When she had gone, Miss Pardew sighed.

"When people are in love," she said to herself, "it doesn't seem to matter what you say to them. Well, I've done what I can. If there were such things as love potions, I'd say she'd given him one."

The next day, when Miss Pardew went into Mrs. Thole's room to help her dress, she found her sitting up in bed writing letters.

"Good-morning, Alice. I'm just scribbling a few letters to people at home to tell them the good news."

"What good news?" asked Miss Pardew, staring at her from the foot of the bed.

"The news of my engagement to Sir Beverly, of course. What else? I've written to Aunt Maud, and Uncle Alec, and Catherine Poltriss. And I'm just finishing a letter to my poor mother-in-law. She'll hate the idea of my marrying again, but it can't be helped."

Her pen flew over the paper, while Miss Pardew stood perfectly still, as though she were turned to stone.

"There. That's done. You haven't congratulated me, Alice."

Miss Pardew was looking indignant, as though someone had insulted her.

"No, and I'm not going to—or him, either. I think it's a shame. I do, and I don't care who knows it."



When at length she could get in a word on her own account, she held up the buckle and said: "I'd like to have this."

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"Alice, if I weren't so happy, I'd pack you off to England this minute. I suppose you can't bear the idea of my being Lady Erskine. You were always envious and jealous. That's why none of the family are very fond of you. But you've had an unhappy life, so we try to forgive you. Please take these down and post them."

"My family are just as fond of me as I am of them, I'm sure," said Miss Pardew, her face growing redder, "and, as for envious, I wouldn't be in your shoes for all the money in the world. Thank heaven I'm no slave to hair-dressers and masseurs and corset-makers. My hair's the colour the Lord meant it to be, and as for my disposition . . ."

"Take those letters down and post them," commanded Mrs. Thole. "I don't know how I put up with you. You'd try the patience of a saint. And when you've posted them, please go to Sir Beverly's door, room twenty-seven, and tell him I'll be ready for lunch at half-past twelve. And then come back and help me dress."

Miss Pardew left the room, the letters in her hand. She felt that as soon as she put them in the letter-box that poor young man's doom would be sealed. He, with his youth and good looks, married to Harriet Thole! It was a dreadful, dreadful thing. Little did she think, when Harriet asked her to come and spend the winter in Monte Carlo, that such a thing would happen. She reached the hall and approached the box. She lingered in front of it. Why should she, who would do anything to prevent this marriage, be obliged to send off the letters announcing it? Why should it be her hand that despatched them? She was going to see Sir Beverly in a minute. She would ask him if this thing could possibly be true. Perhaps it still wasn't too late. Guiltily, she put the letters into her leather hand-bag, and turned to go up the stairs. As she did so, she saw the manager in consultation with two odd-looking men. She heard Sir Beverly's name mentioned, and observed that the manager looked nervous and upset. One of the men remained by the front door, the other went with the manager into his private office. Wondering a little, Miss Pardew went up to room number twenty-seven. She knocked, and received no reply. Knowing that young men are often heavy sleepers, she knocked again. Still there was no reply. A faint sound within, such as a man might make in his sleep, encouraged her to try again. Then she turned the knob of the door and opened it; but discreetly, for it was not correct for a spinster to look into a gentleman's bedroom. She opened it a little wider and a little wider, then suddenly her brain took in what her eyes saw, and she screamed, and screamed again. When they came upstairs, they found her on the floor, with the dying man's head in her lap, wiping his forehead with her handkerchief.

"My poor boy," she was sobbing, "my poor, poor boy!"

He died with her tears on his face; the revolver, with its silencer, lay on the floor beside him. He had shot himself a glancing shot through the heart and lungs. He lived for about four minutes.

Mrs. Thole lay in a darkened room, eau-de-Cologne on her forehead, and an aspirin bottle beside the bed. She had been crying steadily for more than three hours. Suddenly she started up.

"Alice! Those letters! Those letters! Oh, Alice! It will all be in the papers, and just when they read it, my letters will arrive. Oh, I wish I were dead; I wish I were dead."

Miss Pardew was sitting beside the bed, her face buried in her hands. She could never forget, never—his face—oh, poor boy—so good-looking, so young, so . . . so bad, they all said. Harold Tunney, his name was; or Tanney; something like that. He'd done almost everything he oughtn't to do. Unpaid hotel bills were the least of his crimes. And if he could have kept out of the hands of the law for a few weeks more, he'd have married Harriet, and got her money. She had paid his hotel bill for two weeks, and paid for all the lunches and dinners—he'd told

her some story of a letter of credit that had got lost, of losses at roulette—and she'd believed every word of it.

"It's all right, Harriet," Miss Pardew said in a muffled voice, "they're here. I didn't post them. I just *felt* I oughtn't to. Here they all are."

Mrs. Thole fell back on her pillows with a groan of relief.

"Oh, Alice, how can I ever thank you? Oh, it seems like a miracle! Tear them up, stamps and all. Tear them into little tiny pieces. How wonderful you are! You knew all along. I don't know how on earth you knew. I never guessed. I suppose I was an old fool. But an on-looker sees most of the game, I expect. Oh, Alice, I'm so thankful. There's a big bit there, that you dropped. Tear it up. How could I have thought . . . but a woman can never believe she's too old or unattractive to be loved. And just a few hours ago we were dancing together at the Metropole!"

Fresh tears ran down both their faces. Miss Pardew was shattered, because she had seen a man die. She thought she would never be the same. She knew she could never forget. He had opened his eyes and looked into her eyes, and seen her tears, and recognised her, and died with her name on his lips.

Mrs. Thole was shattered because she had had such a narrow escape, and because a man who had so lately been talking to her and laughing was now lifeless. Only one person in the whole world knew what a fool she had been. Alice Pardew. And Alice Pardew had tried to prevent it. Somehow she had known . . .

"Alice," she said, in a gentle voice. Miss Pardew had never heard from her before. "Alice, how did you know . . . that he wasn't what he seemed? Tell me how you knew."

Then Miss Pardew broke down again. She had looked into the eyes of a dying man. She wasn't going to tell a lie.

"I didn't know," she sobbed. "I was only pretending. I didn't want you to marry him. I thought it was terrible for a young man like him, with his life in front of him, to marry a middle-aged woman like you. And a selfish woman, too; and a hard woman, and artificial, and mean. . . . Yes, you are mean, Harriet, you are! After what I've been through I'm not going to say anything that isn't true. We're a pair of horrid, horrid women. I suppose I was jealous of you, and envious, as you said I was. But you humiliated me—yes, over and over again, and when you bought that buckle I was going to buy, it just seemed as

if I couldn't bear you any longer. I thought you'd cast some sort of spell on . . . on him . . . and I wanted to save him from you. I warned him against you . . . I warned a stranger . . . a man who was wanted by the police . . . against my own blood relation . . ."

She was overcome by her grief, her shame.

Mrs. Thole put out a hand.

"Never mind," she said, "never mind. It's been a terrible experience. I feel we know all about each other now, Alice. I want to give you that buckle . . . I really do . . . and that amethyst brooch of mine that you admire. Yes, I want to, please—it will make me feel better. I'll help you pack to-morrow, and we'll go to Cannes and get away from all these horrors. You've been a good friend to me, Alice, even without meaning to be. I can never thank you enough." She added: "When we get to Cannes, I'll look about me for a maid. You've done quite enough waiting on me. You shan't do any more."

"Ah, no," protested Alice Pardew, "please don't get a maid. Oh, please don't, Harriet. What would I do with myself if I couldn't do little things for you? Oh, please don't get a maid. I couldn't bear it."

"Very well," said Mrs. Thole, not without satisfaction. "I'd really rather wait till we get back to London, if you don't mind. Just wet this handkerchief with Cologne again. And fetch me my hand-mirror from the dressing-table. And while you're up, just raise that blind a few inches, will you?"

[THE END.]



Miss Pardew found the young man in the hall. "Mrs. Thole will be fifteen minutes late, I'm afraid," she said.



They found her on the floor, with the dying man's head in her lap, wiping his forehead with her handkerchief.



MISGIVINGS.

THE SPIDER:

"Come hither! Come, and do not fear;
For I am not a spider, dear.
Your mother can't have told you so,
For they are horrid things, you know;
And I am not, am I?"

THE ELF:

"Thanks, but I think I'd rather not;
You've such long legs, and such a lot.
You may not be a spider, ma'am. . . .
But, oh! how very glad I am
That I am not a fly!"



THE REVELLER REFORMED.

"Sir, will Madam let you play
With us three bachelors to-day?
In almost all the games there be
Four have better fun than three."

But the feathered Benedict
Had a Beatrice somewhat strict.
Fain had he gone, yet might not go;
For he thought "Yes," but she said "No."



SYCAMORE PLANES.

Look how they float; look how they spin!
The one that waggles least will win;
For wagging ones go round and round,
Instead of sinking to the ground.

Lord Robin said he would be judge;
Yet from his twig he will not budge.
He sits and whistles to the sun;
How can he tell which plane has won?



"TATTENHAM CORNER."

Hurrah! here's the yellow
Tassel at last!
Buck up, old fellow,
The corner is passed . . .
Isn't it great?
We're into the straight!

We mustn't be cocky . . .
That's folly, of course . . .
But you've the best jockey
And I've the best horse,
And we'll win, sure as fate,
Now we're into the straight!



ANCESTORS.

YOUTH AND BEAUTY OF BYGONE DAYS PORTRAYED IN THE ART OF MINIATURE.

These charming miniatures, taken in order from left to right, are thus described—
Top row: (1) A miniature on enamel by N. Hone (1718-84); (2) "A Young Woman Unknown," by Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830); (3) "Le Comte de Saint-Abens," by P. H. Hall (1739-93); Middle row: (1) "The Bather" (French school of the 17th

Century); (2) "La Comtesse d'Angivillers"; (3) A painting on porcelain (period, 1810);
Bottom row: (1) "A Young Woman Unknown" (English school of the end of the 18th century); (2) "A Young Woman," by P. H. Hall; (3) "A Young Woman in Rustic Attire" (French school of the end of the 18th century).

Once-Upon-a-Time Land: Fairy Tales for Christmas.



The Ass's Skin.

ON his wife's death, a King had the extraordinary idea of marrying his daughter. She, to discourage him, demanded a dress the colour of the sun, then one the colour of the moon, and then one the colour of the weather. At last, in despair, she asked for the skin of the ass which got the gold that enriched the Court. The ass was killed, and the skin was given to her. Then she ran away, wrapped in the ass's skin, and became a servant on a Prince's farm. After her work, she would shut herself in her poor room and put on her fine dresses. One day the Prince, happening to pass by, peeped through the keyhole. He saw her in the dress the colour of the moon, fell in love, and asked her to marry him. She consented, and great was his joy when he found she was a Princess.



Little Red Riding Hood.

LITTLE Red Riding Hood was sent by her mother to take food to her sick grandmother. She was warned not to talk to anyone. In a thick wood she met the Wolf, whom she took to be a nice dog, and started talking.

"Where are you going?" asked the Wolf, and she told him all. The Wolf went on ahead to the grandmother's cottage, and devoured her. He then took her place in bed, put on her nightcap and spectacles, and awaited the little girl. He was just going to eat her when some wood-cutters rushed in and killed him.



Once-Upon-a-Time Land: Fairy Tales for Christmas.

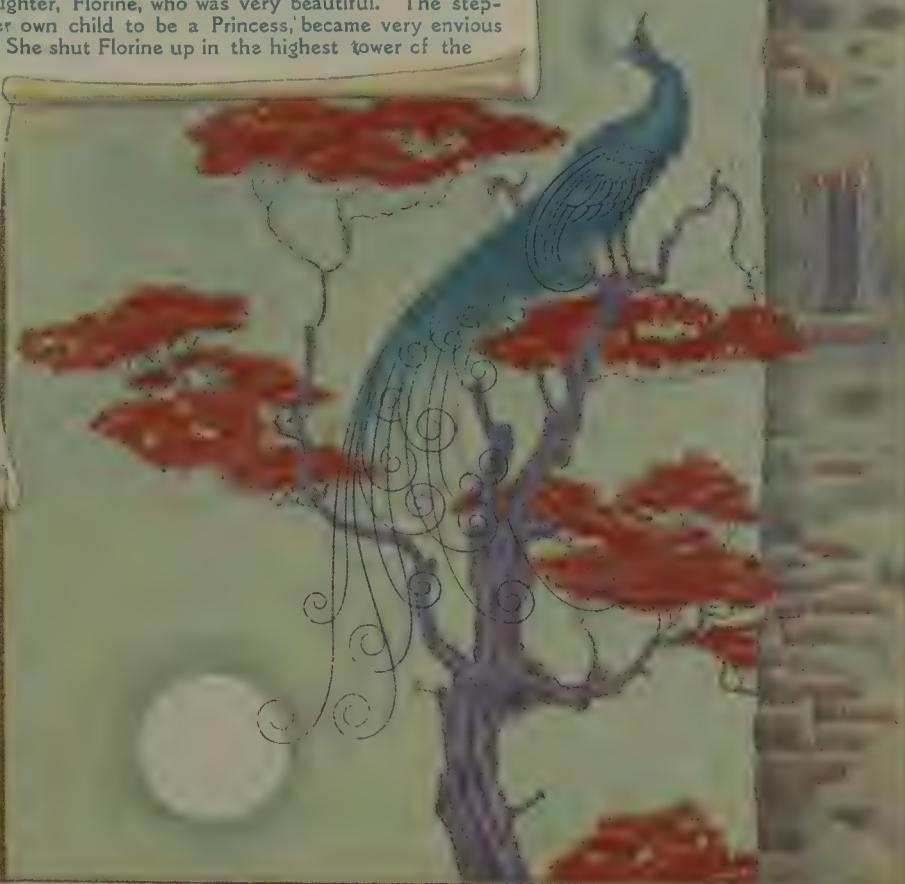


Tom Thumb and the Seven-League Boots.

TOM THUMB was a ridiculously small child, and the youngest of a large family. His parents were so poor that they decided to abandon their children. Lost in a forest, the little boys encountered an Ogre, and it was only due to Tom Thumb that they escaped being devoured. The Ogre pursued them until he was tired, when he lay down under a tree and fell asleep. Tom Thumb seized the opportunity to steal the Ogre's boots. Thanks to these magic boots, which covered seven leagues at each stride, Tom Thumb was engaged as First Courier of the King, who allowed him to help his brothers and his parents.

The Blue Bird.

ACERTAIN widower married a widow, whose daughter was the same age as his own. Prince Charming visited their castle, and fell in love with the widower's daughter, Florine, who was very beautiful. The step-mother, who wanted her own child to be a Princess, became very envious and swore vengeance. She shut Florine up in the highest tower of the castle, and changed Prince Charming into a Blue Bird, for she was a sorceress. Florine cried her heart out, but the Blue Bird did not forget her; he came to see her every night and brought her magnificent jewels. It was only after many adventures that, aided by a good fairy, the lovers were able to be married.



"THIS IS THE EMPIRE'S STANDARD OF QUALITY"



In whatever part
of the world you
happen to be, you
will get the best
if you say
"Crosse & Blackwell"
to your grocer.

CROSSE & BLACKWELL
The name that is known to the ends of the earth



The Balcony

From the French
of
Maurice Renard.



EOR the fifteenth time dawn found me on my feet, frenziedly brooding over my disgrace, and pacing with angry strides that same chamber, lit by a narrow, grated window, where my rival had lodged for two long years. Yes, only fifteen days earlier the arrogant and fatuous Borso Borsini had still been held captive there, thanks to my influence with the Prince in whose good graces I had taken his place—even as I had now taken it in that Bastille of Verenza, the *Tour des Seigneurs*.

My exasperation remained as fierce as on the very night of the outrage. It was the most bitter that a man can feel. For, however I might vilify the proud, tyrannical little potentate who had dared to cast me off, I well knew that I alone was responsible for my own downfall. And this knowledge made me blanch with fury, made me grind my teeth, and clench my hands inside my silken pockets, and tramp, tramp to and fro, till my brain almost reeled, between the massive door and the thin cleft through which stole the light of dawn.

So then, *I*—*I*—had allowed myself to be blinded by fortune—*I*, whose patience and astuteness had raised me up so high. I had lapsed into luxurious repose, and pride, my damnable pride, had wrecked me. To fall, to fall thus in one single plunge, for a blunder, for a piece of bravado, *I*, the favourite; *I*, the king of the world—in short, *I*, Caradossa! I was intoxicated, I tell you. I was drunk with power, gorged with honours, and I did not see—so confident was I of Teodoro's affection for me—I did not see his lassitude increasing, or my ruin taking form.

In one single plunge, did I say? Nay. That *bonbonnière* was merely a pretext, and my audacity was merely an excuse. Now, by dint of living over again, incessantly, incessantly, incessantly, the final stages of my reign, I could perceive the signs, the symptoms, all the circumstances that ought to have made me aware of the impatience of his Highness. The cup was full. When that *bonbonnière* fell, it made the cup brim over. That is all.

Verily it was not worth my while to play that detestable part so long, a part so alien to my character! But what would you? In order to oust Borso Borsini from the mind of Teodoro was it not essential that I should charm him with new whims, and with sports very different from those with which his boon companion had been wont to divert him? Before hatching the supreme plot which was to land Borso in the *Tour des Seigneurs*—here, *mordieu*, in this very spot—was it not necessary

that I should lower his credit? Was it not indicated that I, Caradossa, should usurp his place by amusing his Highness with the manifestations of a personality exceedingly unlike that of Borso, since I felt myself unequal to beating him with his own weapons?

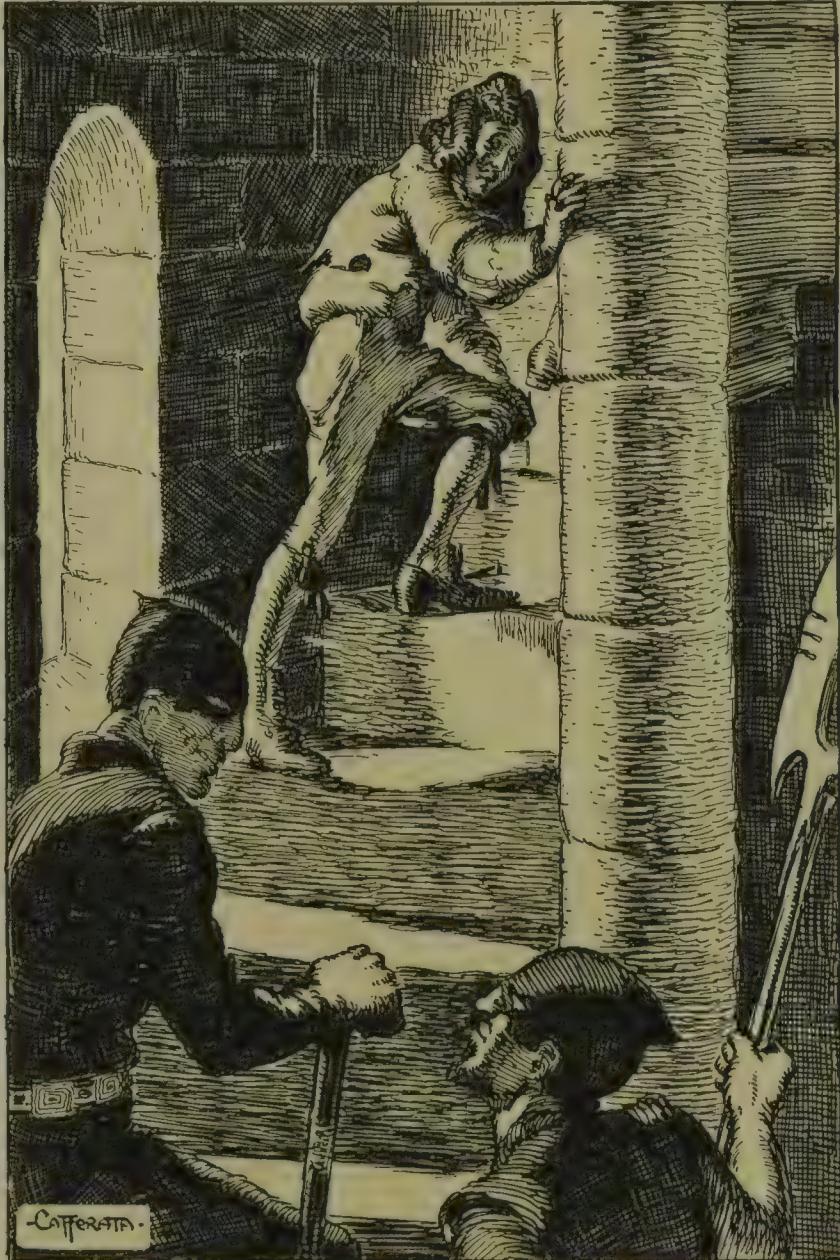
Ah, if only I could have wielded a rapier, aimed a gun, managed a horse, better than that great bully! But those were exercises in which the Corsican could outstrip me, and they happened to be exercises which, under his influence, Teodoro found strangely fascinating.

Strangely! When I arrived at the Court of Verenza the ascendancy of Borso Borsini was expressed in a mighty clashing of steel and thundering of firearms, and a perfect symphony of horn-blowing and neighing. Fencing was the rage, horsemanship was the order of the day. Everyone was given over to shooting and hunting. Tennis was the reigning pastime. In brief, brutality triumphed over all elegance.

Egad, I, too, loved fencing! I, too, loved to bestride a thoroughbred, and to bring down a bustard. Yes, I loved all these things; and, above all, I love a gallop, jumping hedges and ditches, and crashing through the greenwood, swept onward by the eagerness of a mettlesome mount. I love to press my knee against the flank of a prancing and curveting horse on the race-course or in the riding-school, making him rear and subside, caper and caracole, at my will. Yes, yes; I, too, love the rush of the wind of action, the sense of suppleness and strength, of sweat on the taut muscles, and the delicious fatigue that follows upon a hard-spent day.

Well, well, I sacrificed all this to my destiny. I dissembled all these tastes of mine with care, simply because Borso Borsini was an ass, a brute, awkward in a minuet, incapable of turning a set of verses, a dolt who could do nothing but grin inanely at the sound of an aria or the sight of a picture.

My countenance pleased his Highness—as, indeed, I had thought that it would. As soon as I had grasped the main features of his Court I resolutely adopted my line of action, and vowed that the sight of so much crude materialism revolted me. At the same time, I affected an overwhelming enthusiasm for music and poetry, painting and sculpture, and pretended to attach supreme importance to all questions of elegance and taste. I forced myself to devote infinite care to my attire. My wigs came from Paris, my ruffles from Flanders or Holland. I invented new perfumes, new trinkets, new dances. I was seen to toy with a tiny painted fan, to carry a muff, to caress damnable



It seemed to me that the climb would never end.



DON JUAN AND THE SPECTRE.

Don Juan, making merry with his friends,
Turns pale with death, a jest still on his lips,
As Pedro's ghost, accusing finger stretched.
Claims forfeit for foul slurs upon his name.

Tradition has it that Don Juan once insulted the memory of one Don Pedro by an insolent challenge made before his statue. At a feast given by Don Juan to his many doubtful friends, when wine and song were flowing, the outraged spirit of Don Pedro appeared in the hall to claim forfeit the life of Don Juan in retribution.



THE SPUR.

A Scottish hostess fired with greed of spoil
Commands her clansmen gather round her board;
And lo! the cover raised reveals a Spur
To goad them forth to ravin for their meat.

Here is depicted a legend of a borderland hostess, in the old days of cattle-raiding forays, who gave a banquet to her clansmen and warriors. When the cover was removed from the dish there was disclosed a spur in the place of the anticipated joint. The inference was: "If you want meat, raid for it!"

little lap-dogs dragged after me, by a lacquey, on a beaded leash. I would swoon at the sound of a harpsichord; I was skilful in the singing of villanelles and barcarolles of my own composition, accompanying myself on the guitar. I concocted gallant and subtle quatrains for the delight of the ladies. And I paraded a delicate and aristocratic aversion for all those rough pursuits in which Borso Borsini excelled me most.

No great efforts were necessary in order to gather round me a group of ladies eager for elegance, of half-wits too feeble to shine unless it were by reflected light, and of watchful folk who followed whither I led because they saw that the Prince was beginning to appreciate my graces. My star rose steadily. His Highness Teodoro, Prince of Verenza, distinguished me by his friendship. Before long, the fencing-masters, the gunsmiths, and the horse-dealers were cursing me, while the painters, the lute-makers, and the dancing-masters wove garlands for my brow.

I had my hangers-on, after the fashion of the Ancient Romans. His Highness did me the honour to copy my way of dressing. He imitated my tones and gestures. He filled his snuff-boxes with my favourite snuff. He became enamoured of poems and operas, canes and ruffles, parrots and marmosets. After a time the whole Court took to sniffing whenever I had a cold.

Borso Borsini was a beaten man. To make his downfall complete it was only necessary for one of the courtiers in my train to slander him a little. The Prince incontinently clapped him into the *Tour des Seigneurs*, and declared that the blockhead had made a fool of him by dragging him into the dismal paths of ignorance and barbarity.

When, in my cell, I recalled the incredible delights of those days, when I beheld the height to which I had climbed, I, the wretched prisoner now striding to and fro like a caged beast in a space twelve feet square, my despair became so intense that it was like a physical seizure in which all my vital forces ebbed and sank low. "Yes," I said to myself, "I have tasted power—I have made the ridiculous ruler of a venerable State dance to my piping. I had my coach and my palace. I dipped my fingers into the public exchequer. Ministers studied my whims. My beringed hand has even turned aside the course of international affairs. But then—then that *bonbonnière* fell."

The scene was re-enacted in my memory for the thousandth time. A game of faro was nearing its end. I had had the most astonishing luck. The table was brilliant. During the game I had chaffed Teodoro unmercifully on his bad luck. At last we rose. It was time to disperse. My evil genius decreed that the Prince and I should be surrounded entirely by ladies. I pulled my *bonbonnière* out of my pocket. It fell to the ground. And then—intoxicated by my own arrogance—I looked haughtily at the Prince, pointed to the golden object gleaming on the flag-stones, and said, half-expectantly and half as if surprised, "Well, Teodoro?"

But a woman—it was the adorable Delia—a woman, aghast at my audacity, picked up the *bonbonnière*. She actually picked it up!

The Prince, however, took it from her. "Madame," he said, "I

cannot permit—" Then, turning to me with a white face, and abandoning the familiar thee-and-thou, he said, "Monsieur, you shall receive this in due course—from the right person."

Disconcerted, I swung round on my scarlet heels. "My servants!" I called out, in a voice which I tried to keep unconcerned. Not long afterwards the *bonbonnière* was delivered to me by the hands of certain police-officers, with an intimation that I must follow them forthwith. And I followed them—to the *Tour des Seigneurs*, that high, square, ancient tower, built of dusky red stone, which dominates the palace square. For fifteen days I ate my heart out in shame and fury. And on every morning of the fifteen a gaoler brought me a little note, sealed with his Highness's private seal, a note which I, stiff-necked in my conceit, crumpled up and tossed out of the window every time.

"Are you ready to beg my pardon?" That was the question which Prince Teodoro reiterated, day after day. One morning the missive made its appearance much earlier than usual. Verenza was barely awake. I could hear its murmur, rising with the dawn, and through the bars of my window I could see the gorgeous spectacle of the great crimson-and-black city emerging from the shadows of night.

I broke the scarlet wax whereon the princely seal had imprinted the image of a saint standing upon a crocodile, and read:

"For the last time, do you sue for mercy?"

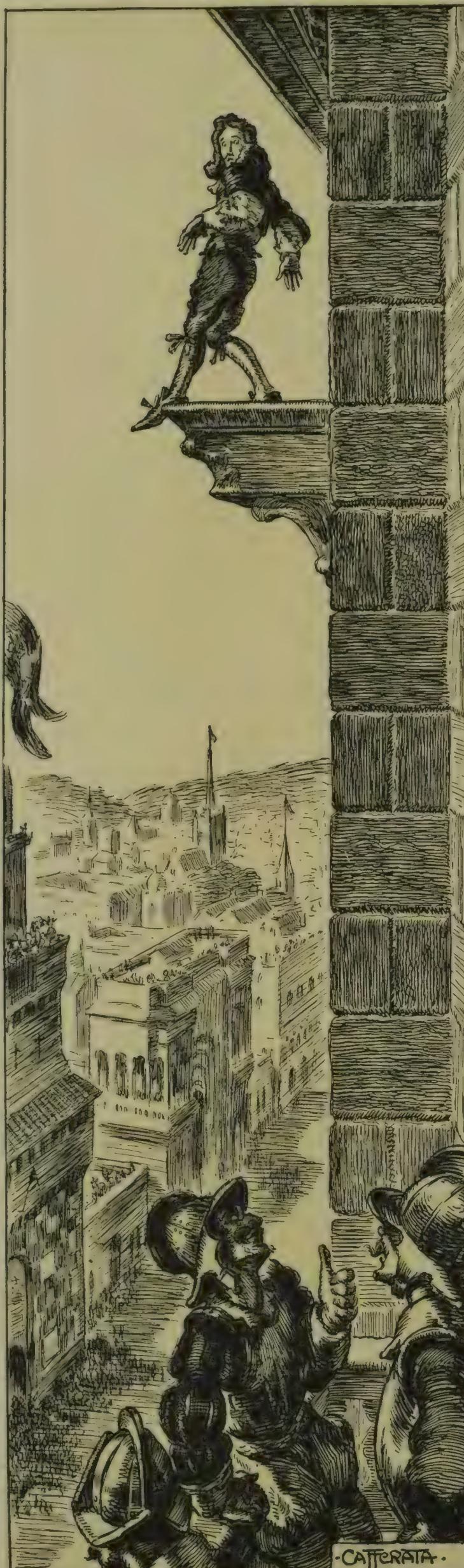
Then the gaoler silently slipped an ivy-leaf into my hand. Upon it a needle had pricked three words and a sign. As a symbol, the leaf itself spelt constancy. The message ran: "Danger—submit." The cryptic monogram showed me that the warning came from Delia.

Meanwhile, the fellow awaited my answer. For once I hesitated. Danger? What danger? Was I not in prison? And was not that a punishment too heavy for my crime? I was guilty of having first pleased a Prince and then displeased him. Was I not expiating both my cunning and my awkwardness very bitterly? So be it. But had I not also humiliated a vindictive Prince? And was not Borso Borsini restored to favour, that same Borso Borsini whom the calumnies of my partisans had once thrust into this very cell? I remained wrapped in thought, gazing through the window at the bell-tower of San Gabriele silhouetted against the eastern sky. I was reckoning up the number of my enemies. I recalled the gibes of ironical pamphleteers at that effeminate pose, that womanish excess of sensibility which I had made the height of fashion. The populace had little love for me, and I had turned them against their prince as well. What blindness! What blunders!

The remembrance of all these false steps of mine served only to re-kindled my wrath. By dint of acting the capricious idiot I was in a fair way to become one. Before the impassive face of the gaoler, I screwed the august missive into a ball, and cast it scornfully into space. "There," I said, with extreme hauteur, "there is my reply."

That was why I was taken to the balcony.

(Continued on page 43.)



The shelf whereon I stood was receding into the wall.

Always trumps— Bird's Custard!



"The Queen of Hearts was
baking tarts, The King
was — wooing BIRD'S"

Helping himself to good health.....



He knows what's good! Mother knows, too, that HOVIS is, of all breads, the most nourishing and delicious. It contains the LIFE and heart of the wheat. It builds bone and muscle. No other bread is so rich in the health-giving vitamins as well as in Phosphates which feed brain and nerves. And so digestible, too!

TO HOUSEWIVES:

There is 25% of added wheat-germ in HOVIS—a quarter of its entire bulk.

Let your next loaf be HOVIS, but for your own satisfaction, be sure it is HOVIS.

HOVIS

(TRADE MARK)

Nourishing—and Nice

BEST BAKERS BAKE IT

About a quarter of an hour after mid-day, a group of rascals came to fetch me. I recognised them, not without alarm, as the official torturers. Stupidly, in the belief that they were going to put me to the question, I made ready to descend to the lowest dungeons of the tower. On the contrary, they made me clamber up a spiral staircase. It seemed to me that the climb would never end. But at last we entered a shadowy chamber, entirely empty and bare. Outside I could hear a far-off, confused murmuring. Then, suddenly, a door opened. Through this door I could see nothing but the blazing sky, the Italian sky which is blue even as blood is red. A great uproar arose from the unknown depths beyond.

The abrupt light had almost blinded me, after the perpetual twilight of my cell. Through my eye-lashes I could see, however, that the door gave upon an unrailed balcony. Instinct stiffened my limbs, terror made me throw myself backward with uncontrollable violence.

"Sir, I swear to you by God Almighty that you are not going to be thrown over."

It was an honest voice; it inspired conviction. "What then?" I stammered, turning my head, "What is that?"

Three voiceless Titans dragged me forward. They led me to the threshold of the balcony. A second uproar, more formidable than the last, greeted my appearance, *and the door was shut behind me.*

At a glance I understood. Lashed by anger, swollen with pride, my whole soul rose up within me; and, from the summit of my arrogance, I looked down into the abyss.

A hundred feet below, the palace square, covered with a crowd of tiny figures, seemed like a well of which even the rim was far beneath me. Higher up, and immediately opposite the tower, stretched the terrace of the palace, and there I could make out a group of men and women in glittering attire. Yellow parasols, and pale blue and pink ones, moved to and fro. The Prince was seated on a sort of dais draped with orange colour. Near him, leaning on his shoulder, a comely cavalier—Borsò—stood looking at me.

With uplifted faces they all stared. All of them, they in the square, they at the windows, they on the terrace. Some of them shouted, "Caradossa! Caradossa!" towards the tower, and added insulting epithets.

And Caradossa understood. Vertigo!

My double ordeal was to be exposed there, and to succumb to dizziness.

Ah, Teodoro, sly and cruel, but none the less stupid Teodoro, you had remembered my absurd fears, my morbid apprehensions, demonstrated so often during my foppish career. The sight of blood almost made me swoon, didn't it? I was afraid of deep water. And heights—oh, above all things I dreaded heights! I fled from terraces, didn't I? And when there were *autos-da-fé* and triumphal processions, and I had to appear beside you on the great balcony of the palace, I used to shut my eyes and scream out that the abyss had a fascination for me, and that dizziness held my knees rigid with agony, didn't I? So this is your vengeance—a dizzy pillory!

"Poor fool," thought I, "you wanted to feast the eyes of your subjects upon my degradation! You saw me dithering on this ledge! You heard me howling with terror. Very good—look at me!" And, hand on hip, I advanced to the stone brink, whence, coldly and calmly, I surveyed the vast scene.

Verenza, the black and crimson city, with its churches, belfries, and domes, lay spread beneath my eyes like a map in high relief. Far beneath, the motley and tumultuous crowd surged to and fro. Halberdiers, wearing the striped uniform designed not long since by me, were keeping a space clear.

Just below the balcony, at the foot of the precipitous tower, the pattern of the bare pavement merged into a mesh of flagstones. They had taken precautions lest I should fall. And, indeed, that would have been the exact spot. Mockingly I allowed the famous *bonbonnière* to crash down upon it. After which, leaning negligently against the

doorway, I fanned myself with an embroidered handkerchief. The sun was beating fiercely upon my strange prison.

Then, suddenly, I felt the stone move beneath my feet. I could not suppress a start. Had it really moved? Motionless, stiffened desperately to attention, I put all my senses on the alert. From within the tower I heard a dull whirring of machinery, and I saw that gently, with ghastly slowness, the shelf whereon I stood was receding into the wall.

A horrible shudder, like the creeping of a host of ice-cold insects, covered me from head to foot. My brain reeled. With a gigantic effort I mastered myself. After all, this might only be a refinement of cruelty. The stone would stop receding when the platform was a mere ledge, and the door would open, and I should be saved.

The door—it was solid and immovable still. When I pressed against it, it seemed like a wall of wood. The actual wall, of crimson stone, the blind, stark wall, offered neither projection nor cranny. It was absolutely perpendicular. I glanced upwards. The summit of the tower was beyond my reach. And grave faces—oh, terribly grave—looked down from it at me. The stone continued to recede; my ledge was steadily dwindling.

An extraordinary silence paid tribute to my agony. I felt that it was now time to make ready for the supreme struggle—perhaps to make ready for death. But not without a struggle first! I jibbed at the idea of stripping off my coat. A last shred of pride deterred me. By way of clearing for action I merely slipped my rings from my fingers and put them in my pockets. This done, I lay down full length, afraid of losing my balance if I remained upright.

Already the ledge was too small for me, and its continued retreat was pressing me against the door. I realised that if I remained thus immobile, the final effort would soon become impossible, and I determined to make it without more delay. Gripping the edge of the stone with both hands, I allowed myself to slip down and swing free.

All my life—ah, all my life long—I shall remember the thrilling cry, a woman's cry, that rose from the terrace of the palace. Delia, Delia, my dearest heart—your love was betrayed by your despair! Ah, how I adored you at that terrible moment when I was about to die, to die alone before a callous multitude. I tried to call to you, "Farewell, Delia!" but only a hoarse rattle of anguish came from my throat.

The force of gravitation began to drag at my limbs: my head was buzzing; an infernal prickling sensation pervaded my frame. My skull was a beehive and my body an ant-heap. Then I felt like a leaden image hanging from two hands of ice. Suddenly, my fingers came in contact with the wall, and it began to thrust them away from it. And the wall was pressing itself against me, hot and sinister. Already my eyes were too dim to see it. It was then, at the moment when I was about to let go, that my wrists were gripped by powerful fingers and that, as I was hoisted upwards like a dead body, I lost consciousness.

That same evening, at the hour when the sky had newly decked itself with all its starry jewels, I clambered unsteadily into the post-chaise which, with a cavalry escort, was to bear me out of the territories of Prince Teodoro.

Weakly I sank back on to the leather cushions. My nails were still bleeding, I still had the illusion that my throbbing fingers were clinging to something angular and hard. An inexpressible distress overwhelmed me. But at the root of it lay neither exile, nor disgrace, nor loss of fortune. Delia, of all the treasures that had been snatched from me, I regretted thee only at that hour!

And I wept bitterly. For I little guessed that the diminutive page, perched unobtrusively at the coachman's elbow, was only waiting till his Highness's hussars had half-wheeled their horses homeward in order to jump down from the box. Then, in the light of the rising sun—oh, Delia!—you appeared at the door of the carriage, your face all transfigured with love!

[THE END.]



"THE PIGEON MAN." [Continued from Page 16.]

she reclined gracefully in her chair staring musingly at the ceiling. His watchful gaze did not quit her face even when the door was suddenly thrust open and a tatteredemalion figure hobbled into the room.

Trompeter, his face a mask of steel, saw how, at the sound of the door closing, the woman at his side looked up—saw, too, the little furrow of perplexity that suddenly appeared between her narrow, arching eyebrows. But the swift, suspicious glance she shot at her companion found him apparently intent on studying the end of his cigarette, yet, even as her gaze switched back to the outcast, cowering in forlorn abandonment in the centre of the floor, the Colonel's bright blue eyes were quick to note the expression of horror-struck amazement which for one fleeting instant flickered across her regular features.

But the next moment she was bored and listless as before. So swift was her reaction that it was as though her face had never lost its wonted air of rather sulky indifference. She darted an amused glance at the impassive visage gazing down upon her and laughed.

"You have some queer visitors, Herr Oberst," she said. "Tell me"—she indicated the tramp with a comic movement of the head—"is he one of us?"

"No," replied Trompeter, with quiet emphasis.

"Then who is he?"

"I was hoping you would be able to tell me that."

She stared at him for a moment, then suddenly broke into a peal of merry laughter.

"Oh, my dear Colonel," she exclaimed, "you do their ingenuity too much honour."

"And yet," observed Trompeter quietly, "he's one of their star men." His eyes were on the prisoner as he spoke. But the tramp, leering idiotically, stared into space and dribbled feebly.

Sylvia Averescu laughed incredulously. "Then they've changed their methods. All the British Secret Service aces I've known were serving officers, or ex-officers. You're not going to claim that this miserable creature is an English gentleman, Colonel. Why, his hands alone give you the lie!"

"Specially roughened for the job!"

"What job?"

But the Colonel left the question unanswered. "The English are devilish thorough," he added. "I'll grant them that!"

The woman left her chair and went boldly up to the idiot. With a pointing finger she indicated a "V" of yellow skin that appeared below his uncollared neck between the lapels of his jacket.

"Look," she vociferated in disgust, "the man's filthy. He hasn't had a bath for years!" She turned about to face Trompeter, who had followed her. "If this man is what you say, he would have white skin, a properly tended body, under his rags. But this creature is disgusting!"

Trompeter stepped swiftly up to the prisoner and with brutal hands ripped the ragged jacket apart. The man wore no shirt; his coat was buttoned across his naked body. The Colonel recoiled a pace and clapped his handkerchief to his nose. "Pfui Deibel!" he muttered.

Something had rattled smartly on the floor. Trompeter stooped quickly with groping fingers; then, drawing himself erect, stared fixedly at the prisoner. The outside pocket of the idiot's jacket had been almost ripped away in the vigour of the Colonel's action and hung lamentably down. Trompeter's hand darted into the torn pocket and explored the lining. His fingers dredged up some tiny invisible thing which he transferred to the palm of his other hand.

With an air of triumph he swung round to the woman. "Well," he remarked roughly, "he's for it, anyway. If he were a friend of yours, I should tell you to kiss him good-bye."

At that she faltered ever so slightly. "What do you mean?" Her voice was rather hoarse.

"What I mean," Trompeter gave her back brutally, "is that he's the pigeon man we've been looking for. He'll go before the court in the morning, and by noon he'll be snugly under the sod!"

So saying, he unfolded his clenched hand and thrust it close under her face. Two little shining yellow grains reposed in the open palm. "Maize," he announced grimly. "Food for the birds. Pigeon men always carry it."

With that, he shut his hand and joined it to its fellow behind his back, while he dropped his square chin on his breast and sternly surveyed her.

"And do you mean to say," she questioned unsteadily, "that the military court would send him to his death on no other evidence than that?"

"Certainly. There was an identical case last month. Two English flying officers. They shot them in the riding school at Charleroi. Game lads they were, too!"

"But this poor devil may have picked up some maize somewhere and kept it for food. He looks half-starved, anyway."

Trompeter shrugged his shoulders. "That's his look-out. We're not taking any chances on pigeon men. They're too dangerous, my dear. Not that I want the poor devil shot. I'd rather have him identified."

The woman raised her head and gazed curiously at the Colonel. "Why?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

Trompeter drew her to the window, out of earshot of the prisoner. Outside, the whole town seemed to reverberate to the passage of heavy guns, monsters, snouting under their tarpaulins, that thundered by in the wake of their tractors.

"Because," he said in an undertone, "I can use him to mislead the enemy. Our dear English cousins shall get their pigeon service all right, but after this the birds will carry my reports instead of our friend's. For this I must have the fellow's name." He paused and bent his bushy eyebrows at her. "You know this man?"

"Wait," she bade him, rather breathless. "Let us get this clear. If this man were identified, you would spare his life?"

The Colonel nodded curtly. His eyes never left her face.

"What guarantee have I that you will keep your word?"

"I shall hand over to you the only evidence there is against him."

"You mean the maize?"

"Yes."

She cast a timorous glance across the room to where the prisoner was



She said no more, but moved slowly towards the door. The Colonel saw her put forth one little hand towards the pigeon man.

standing, his head lolling on his shoulder. He had not changed his position. His eyes were half-closed and his tongue hung out under the ragged moustache. The reek of him was pungent in the room.

Silently she held out her hand to Trompeter. Without hesitation he dropped the two grains of maize into the slender palm. She ran to the stove and dropped them in. Impassively the Colonel watched her from the window. The maps on the walls trembled in the din of gun-wheels in the street.



The WHISKY of
HIS
ANCESTORS

The Spirit of Cheerfulness abounds at Christmas-time —
Dewars

Slowly the woman returned to the Colonel's side. He noticed how pale her face appeared against the flame of her hair. She looked at him intently, then said, in a sort of breathless whisper, "You're right. I know him."

A steely light glittered in the quick blue eyes. "Ah! Who is it?"

"Dunlop. Captain Dunlop."

Trompeter leaned forward swiftly. "Not 'The Unknown Quantity'?"

She made a little movement of the shoulders. "I can't tell you. He never attempted to disguise himself with me."

"Did you meet him in Brussels?"

She nodded. "He used to come over from London almost every week-end . . ."

The Colonel grunted assent. "Yes, that was the way they did it before the war." He flashed her a scrutinising glance. "Did you know him well? You're sure you're not making a mistake?"

She shook her head, and there was something wistful in the gesture. "He was my lover . . ."

Trompeter smiled broadly. "Ah," he murmured, "Steuben always managed that sort of thing so cleverly . . ."

"Steuben had nothing to do with it," came back her hot whisper. "No one knew him for a secret agent—at least, not until I found him out. He told me he was an English engineer who came to Brussels on business; I was jealous of him, and one day I discovered he was visiting another woman, a Belgian. Then—then I followed things up and found out the rest. He was frank enough when I confronted him—the English are, you know. He told me he had only been carrying out his orders. And I"—she faltered—"I was part of those orders too . . ."

She clenched her hands tensely, and turned to stare forlornly out at the rain.

"You were fond of him, Madame?"

"My feelings have nothing to do with the business between you and me, Colonel," she told him glacially over her shoulder.

He bowed. "I beg your pardon. And you have told me all you know. What is his full name?"

"James, I think. I called him Jimmy."

"How did he sign his reports? Can you tell me that?"

She nodded. "'J. Dunlop,'" she answered.

"How do you know this?"

"Because I made it my business to find out . . . afterwards!" she answered passionately, and was silent.

"And he is a regular officer?"

"Of the Royal Engineers." She turned to the Colonel. "And now, if you don't mind, I should like to go back to my hotel. I—I don't feel very well. I expect I must have caught a chill. This awful weather . . ."

The Colonel rang. "I'll send for Captain Pracht—"

Like a fury she rounded on him. "For the love of God!" she burst forth, "am I never to be left alone again? Can't I go back to the hotel by myself?"

Trompeter bowed. "Certainly, if you promise to go straight there. It's in your own interest I say it. The P.M. is very strict about civilians just now."

"I'll go straight back," she retorted impatiently. "And you'll keep to our bargain, Colonel?"

The officer inclined his head.

"What—what will you do with *him*?" she asked, rather unsteadily.

"Oh, prisoners of war camp, I suppose," was the brisk answer.

She said no more, but moved slowly towards the door. There she paused and let her eyes rest for an instant on the scarecrow shape that mewed and gibbered between them. The Colonel saw her put forth one little hand towards the

pigeon man and stand thus as though she hoped that he might turn and greet her. But the tramp with his melancholy imbecile stare paid no heed. She seemed to droop as she turned and passed out.

Then Trompeter went up to the prisoner and clapped him encouragingly on the shoulder. "It's a wonderful disguise, Dunlop," he said pleasantly and in flawless English, "and I don't mind telling you that you nearly took me in. But the game's up, my friend! You're spotted. Let's have a friendly talk. I don't expect you to give anything away, but I'm anxious for news of Colonel Ross, my esteemed opposite number on the other side of No Man's Land. I heard he'd been down with this damnable *grippe* . . ."

"Goo . . .!" mumbled the tramp, and the bubbles frothed at his mouth. The telephone on the desk rang. The Colonel left the prisoner to answer it. A well-bred voice said: "His Excellency desires to speak with Colonel von Trompeter." The next instant a high-pitched, furious voice came ringing over the wire.

"Is that Trompeter? So, Herr Oberst, a new division can't come into the corps area without being shelled to ribbons! What the devil are your people doing? What's that you say? You're investigating.

Investigating be damned! I want action—action, do you understand? The whole Corps knows that there's a spy in the area sending information back, and when I ask you what you propose to do about it you tell me you're investigating! *Verdammt nochmal!* what I expect you to do is to catch the lousy fellow and shoot him, and by God, if you don't, I'll have the collar off your back, and don't you forget it! *Himmekreuz - sakrament!* I'll show you who's in command here, you and your investigation! You'll report to me in person at six o'clock this afternoon, and I shall expect to hear then that you've laid hands on this spy. If you fail me this time, Herr Oberst, I give you fair warning that I'll get somebody I can rely upon to carry out my wishes. And you are to understand that the General is extremely dissatisfied with you. Is that clear?"

"Zu Befehl, Exzellenz!" replied the Colonel stiffly, and hung up the receiver. He lit a cigarette and sat at the desk for a full minute, contemplating through a swathe of blue smoke the wretched-looking outcast before him.

"Sorry, Dunlop," he said at last. "I'd have saved you if I could, but charity begins at home. My General demands a victim, and my head is the price. I'm a poor

man, my friend, with no private means and a family to support. I've got powerful enemies, and if I lose this job my career's over. As God is my judge, Dunlop, I can't afford to keep my pledged word." He paused and pressed his handkerchief to his lips. "If there's anything I can do about letting your people know . . ."

He broke off expectantly, but the pigeon man made no sign. With his head cocked in the air his whole attention appeared to be directed to a fly buzzing round the wire of the electric light.

"You'll at least give me the honour," Trompeter went on rather tremulously, "of shaking hands with a brave man?"

But the pigeon man did not even look at him. His grimy right hand stole furtively under his tattered jacket and he writhed beneath his verminous rags. His gaze remained immutably distant, as though he were peering down some long vista. Slowly the grizzled head at the desk drooped and there was a moment's pregnant hush in the room.

Then the Colonel stood up, a stalwart figure, and moved resolutely to a press in the wall. He opened the door and disclosed, neatly hung on pegs, his steel helmet, revolver, Thermos flask, map-case, and saddle-bags. He unstrapped one of the saddle-bags, and, dipping in his hand, brought away in his fingers a few shining orange grains. Then he rang

[Continued on page 48]



AS SLEEPY AS EVER A BIRDIE COULD BE
HE CROWED—I'M NOT DREAMING.
I'M UP IN THIS TREE
AND SOMEBODYS SITTING UP HERE BESIDE ME

YOU SEE
SOMEBODY, SAT AWAY UP IN A TREE
AND THOUGHT
I'M NOT DREAMING—I'M UP IN THI

Suggestions for Christmas Gifts.



3273



M 156



4J. 156



2H. 126

4H. 106

143

65

776

65



3273

"BOBBED" CASE in Lizard, with blue enamel brush. 25/6

M. 156

PARTY CASE in cross-grained morocco, in various colours, fitted with brush, comb, mirror, lipstick and powder-box. 15/6

4J. 156

SABRETACHE BAG in real jazz morocco, lined suedene, with embossed sprayed front and flap. 15/6

2H. 126

SABRETACHE BAGS in real jazz morocco, embossed sprayed front and flap, fitted with large mirror and captive purse. 12/6

4H. 106 Smaller size 10/6

4C. 76 " " 7/6

143

MANICURE CASE in real leather, fitted as illustrated. Obtainable in various colours. 35/6

65

POWDER BOWL, hand-painted, in various colours and designs. 8/11

776

PERFUME SPRAY, to match. 12/6

V.C. 27

BATH CRYSTALS in presentation vase, red or blue design. Four perfumes: Violet, Verbena, Lavender and Cologne. 5/9

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V.C. 27.

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OVER 800 BRANCHES THROUGHOUT GREAT BRITAIN.

and told the orderly to send in Captain Ehrhardt. The officer recoiled at the grim severity of his Chief's expression.

"Also, Herr Hauptmann," was the Colonel's greeting, "you searched this prisoner, did you?"

"Jawohl, Herr Oberst!" said Ehrhardt, in a quaking voice.

"And found nothing, I think you told me?"

"Nothing—that is, except the articles I enumerated, Herr Oberst, namely—"

The stern voice interrupted him. "Would it surprise you to learn that I discovered maize in the prisoner's pocket when I searched him? See!" The Colonel's hand opened and spilled a few grains of maize on the blotter. "It appears to me, Herr Hauptmann, that you have grossly neglected your duty. You've got to wake yourself up, or one of these mornings you'll find yourself back in the trenches with your regiment. Now pay attention to me! The prisoner goes before the tribunal to-morrow. You will have him washed and disinfected and issued with clean clothes immediately, and hand him over to the Provost Marshal. Horst will warn the P.M. The prisoner can have anything he likes in the way of food or drink or smokes. Your evidence will be required at the trial, so you'll have to stay the night. See Horst about a bed. March the prisoner out!"

The door shut and the escort's ringing tramp died away. Grimly the Colonel shook his balled fist at the telephone.

"Break me, would you, you old sheephead!" he muttered through his teeth. "But my pigeon man will spike your guns, my boy! Verdammt, though, the price is high!"

Then, drawing himself up to his full height, he brought his heels together with a jingle of spurs and gravely saluted the door through which the pigeon man had disappeared between the fixed bayonets of his guards.

V.

A week later, in an unobtrusive office off Whitehall, high above the panorama of London threaded by the silver Thames, a large, quiet man sat at his desk and frowned down at a type-written sheet he held in his hand.

"Well," he said, addressing an officer in khaki who stood in an expectant attitude before him, "they've nabbed Tony, Carruthers!"

"Oh, Sir!" ejaculated Carruthers in dismay. "You were right, then?"

"'Fraid so. I knew they'd pinched him when Corps forwarded those Dunlop messages that kept reachin' 'em by pigeon. Prendergast, of Rotterdam, says here he has word from a trustworthy source in Belgium that at Roulers on the 6th the Boches shot a half-witted tramp on a charge of espionage. The trial, of course, was held in secret, but the rumour in the town is that the tramp was a British officer. That'd be

Tony, all right. God bless my soul, what an actor the fellow was! I'd never have lent him for this job, only G.H.Q. were so insistent. Well, he had a good run for his money, anyway. Our friends on the other side used to call him 'N, the Unknown Quantity.' They never managed to identify him, you see. My hat! old Tony must be smilin' to think that he managed to take his incognito down to the grave with him."

"But did he?"

"Obviously, otherwise the old Boches would have signed his real name to those pigeon messages of theirs which have so much amused Ross and his young men at Corps Headquarters."

"But why 'Dunlop,' Sir?"

The large man smiled enigmatically. "Ah," he remarked, "you weren't in the service before the war, Carruthers, or you'd have known that 'Dunlop' was one of our accommodation names in the office.

Most of us were Captain Dunlop at one time or another. I've been Captain Dunlop myself. We run up against some rum coves in this business, and it ain't a bad plan to have a sort of general alias. It prevents identification, and all manner of awkwardness, when the double-crossin' begins." He broke off to chuckle audibly. "Let's see, it's old Trompeter on that front, ain't it? I wonder where he got hold of the office alias, the foxy old devil! He's probably put up another Iron Cross over this! He'd be kickin' himself if he knew the truth. That's the catch about this job of ours, my boy—to recognise the truth when you find it!"

So saying, the large man unlocked his desk and, taking out a book, turned to a list of names. With the red pencil he scored out, slowly and methodically, a name that stood there.

THE END.



His grimy right hand stole furtively under his tattered jacket. . . . Slowly the grizzled head at the desk drooped and there was a moment's pregnant hush in the room.



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The Author wishes to make acknowledgment of the kind co-operation of John Fane in the writing of this tale.

ABAG of gold, honourable suicide, or thrusting a despised antagonist over a cliff." Kai Lung was wise, she mused, but there were many problems in life, including her own, which appeared difficult to face, if these were the only three solutions. The bag of gold might be of use to Michael, if all that people said about Jews was true; and Alec would probably thrust his antagonist over a cliff. There remained for herself "honourable suicide," but, intolerable as life sometimes appeared, that remedy was too drastic.

The book slipped through her fingers, and her thoughts began to stray through memories of the last few months, months which had seemed so much longer than all the rest of her life. She had met and married Alec Sinclair in London, and as he had inherited a business in Calcutta, she went to India with him some few months after their marriage.

She had always loved pageantry and colour, and the glamour of the East attracted her. She came to Calcutta, eager for new visions, and found there a third-rate imitation of the life she had left. Alec spent his days in office, and returned too tired to be a companion to her. His friends were boring—large, practical men, who conversed in a strange jargon of "jute and hessians, lakhs, marwaris, and piece goods."

Their women were even worse. She was invited to interminable female banquets, at which they ate elaborate food, wore their last year's race frocks, and alternately discussed beaux and babies. She had nothing in common with them, and, as the inevitable result, she had been lonely, utterly lonely, until Michael came to Calcutta.

She had known him slightly in London, where she had never given him more than a passing thought. It was curious, she reflected, that there his brilliance and his charm should never have struck her, whilst here, in Calcutta, he seemed to embody all the life she had lost. Immensely rich, artistic, musical, with a vast knowledge of men and their affairs, he had been everywhere, and known everyone, and, moreover, he could discuss with taste and sensibility all the things which she loved—pictures, books, old lace, and Chelsea china. It was only for his companionship that she needed Michael, she assured herself rather desperately. It was only because she was lonely that she anticipated with such intense eagerness the hours which she spent with him.

She picked up Kai Lung, and tried to concentrate her thoughts on China and the Chinese. She was waiting for Michael to take her to Chinatown. He had promised to come at three o'clock, and the hands on her watch seemed to drag maliciously. It was precisely over this visit to Chinatown that she had quarrelled with Alec the night before. It had been horrible, undignified. She hated scenes. Obscurely they made one want to laugh, and if one did, things became worse than ever. Now, when she wanted to forget the whole tiresome affair, scraps of their arguments came back to her mind, and, turning inside her head, refused to be banished. Alec had reproached her because she did not like Calcutta, this horrible place, which was so unlike the golden East as she had pictured it, this place where everyone deteriorated into mere money-making machines.

Alec had said: "If I weren't so busy making money for you, perhaps I would have time to talk about art and make epigrams."

"I don't ask you to do either," she had retorted. "All I want is a little of your companionship, or, failing that, tolerance of those friends who give me what you refuse."

It was curious, she reflected, the average Englishman's aversion to and suspicion of the Jew. She had thought that Alec would be above such petty insularity, would be finer, more broad-minded than the ordinary man. But he had called Michael a "damned Israelite," and had warned her that she was dealing with a man of a different race. "I

THE
TREE of KNOWLEDGE
by
BARBARA
BINGLEY.

don't mind how often you see that Hebrew, if he amuses you, but for Heaven's sake don't have any illusions about him! I know Jews better than you do—I wouldn't be where I am if I didn't. All these Semites are the same—Pathans in frock-coats."

It was foolish of Alec to treat Michael with contempt, and foolish of him to adopt that rather patronising attitude towards herself. She was not an ignorant school-girl, and it was absurd to treat her as such. She was quite old enough to be able to form her own ideas about men and things, and the sooner that Alec realised that, the better it would be for both of them. He had changed since they came to India. All the practical, business side of him had developed at the expense of the other, the Alec whom she had known in London. There he had been utterly delightful, and they had seemed to have so much more in common. Though he was no connoisseur, she knew that somewhere lurked—rather shamefacedly—in a corner of his soul a real love of beauty. But now they were poles apart. Alec would never understand her, and she was not going to allow him to spoil her life and forbid her the one person who made it bearable in Calcutta—Michael.

Someone knocked at the door, and then a servant came in to announce that he had come. She rose to greet him, and found herself looking up into his dark face, where the eyes, startlingly, unexpectedly blue, always surprised her. One imagined that they would be brown, and it was such a relief to find they were blue. They prevented him from having that rather shiny appearance which black eyes give to a face. Yes, she decided, he looked Jewish, but not too Jewish, and he was marvellously different from everyone else. Even his hands, when he helped her into the car, were like no other hands she had ever seen. They were exquisitely sensitive, and, looking at them, she knew at once that he cared tremendously for beautiful things, and would handle them tenderly, sensuously.

The car bumped and swayed as they drove through the hot sunshine, threading their way through an amazing assortment of traffic. There were motors of every kind, tikka

gharries like overflowing boxes on wheels drawn by horses of incredible leanness and garnished with bundles of grass, bullock-carts, babus on bicycles, trailing clouds of dhoti which miraculously never caught on to the other vehicles, as their owners insinuated themselves through the crowded streets. The noise was terrifying, a pandemonium. The trams clanged; the native-driven motors used their horns as if they were mechanical pianos; the drivers of carts and carriages yelled abuse and encouragement impartially; and on the pavements brown, oily humanity jostled and shouted at each other. She leaned out of the car so as to miss no sight of this clamorous, restless crowd. They fascinated her. They were like strange animals let loose, and she felt she was like a spectator of some monstrous circus. There was a block in the traffic, and the car was penned close to the pavement behind the huge, palpitating bulk of a motor-lorry. As she watched the passers-by, there stood out a new type. He swaggered through the crowd, a tall man, with a dagger in his belt and a mat of curls framing his face. His air was so truculent and debonair that she exclaimed, and Michael, following the direction of her pointing finger, smiled.

"That is a Pathan. They come from the North." He leaned out of the car and called: "Starre mashe," to the man, who shouted the same greeting, and then a phrase which she could not catch. She saw his teeth flash in his great black beard, and, like lighthouse answering lighthouse, the same gleam in Michael's face, as he beckoned the man up to the car and began to speak to him in Pushtu.

The Pathan looked at her boldly, an appraising, admiring glance, which at the same time offended and yet amused her by its frankness. He said something to Michael, which made him laugh and look at her

[Continued overleaf.]



The Pathan looked at her boldly, an appraising, admiring glance, and said something to Michael, which made him laugh.

in his turn. It was odd, tantalising, and she longed to know what they said. The lorry in front of them moved on, and Michael waved a hand to the disappearing Pathan.

"What did he say?" she asked.

"Do you really want to know?" he tantalised her.

"Yes, of course I do."

"Well, he asked me where I had bought you, and when, regrettably, I had to confess that you didn't belong to me, he said he had once paid five cows for a woman less beautiful. And that, dearest lady, is the highest compliment you have ever been paid." He smiled his secret, sleepy, Jewish smile, as of one knowing good and evil, and, looking up at him, she laughed happily. It was absurdly incongruous to be worth five cows, and he was perfectly right. She never had been paid such a compliment before.

"We turn to the left here," said Michael. They were on the edge of Chinatown, and she could see rickshaws waiting in a stand by the side of the road, rickshaws with red velvet seats and enchanting little bells, which made inadequate tinklings as the coolies pulled them along. The street grew narrower, and in front of crumbling gateways hung sign-boards, painted with golden lettering. In the doors stood groups of women, some of them Chinese, with neat black clothes and prim, dolls' faces; others were half-castes or poor Armenians. They wore curious, high-waisted, befrilled frocks, such as little girls wore in the *Du Maurier* illustrations of *Punch*.

The street was not much wider than the car, and at a word from Michael to the driver, they drew up before a butcher's shop, standing on one side of an archway leading into a courtyard. Gobbets of meat festooned with flies hung over a greasy board, and a woman, surrounded by amber-coloured children, chattered with the stallholder over the price of a kidney. The smell was appalling, and, as she stepped out of the car, she averted her eyes swiftly from the intimate interiors displayed on the booth. It was disgusting, she thought, and almost she wished she had never come. Perhaps Alec was right after all. He had told her it was a horrible place. They walked through the archway set in the wall, above which hung a wooden placard with the words "A. Minnan. Curious Dealer," printed on it in straggling letters. On the verandah stood a little, smiling Chinaman in a white suit, who bowed them into a room and promised them "Many vallybles just come from China."

Inside, the street and its horrors were forgotten, for on shelves reaching up to the ceiling were vases of porcelain and brass, carved lanterns of painted glass, and, in a little lacquer cabinet, snuff-boxes, a crown of kingfishers' wings, and plaques of carven jade. She was a child again, a child on a holiday, and her eager fingers dragged out the treasures one by one, as she cried her delight in gay little exclamations, whilst Michael stood by, watching her and fingering a small lacquer box, which was the only thing he had picked up.

"I love this," she said, laying a circle of carved white jade lovingly on her palm, and secretly admiring the pale tint of her flesh through the carving. "Ask him how much he wants for it."

"Forty-five lupees. Vellee ancient old piecee," said Mr. Minnan, ingratiatingly.

"C'est trop." Michael took it gently from her hand and replaced it in the cabinet. "Il ne faut pas lui montrez si clairement les choses que vous préférez. Nous reviendrons plus tard."

"Bien. Je comprends."

How curious it was that speaking in a foreign language should give one such a feeling of conspiratorial intimacy. It was almost embarrassing. Then, quite suddenly, she felt that she had behaved stupidly, childishly. She might have been a tourist, exclaiming at everything. He must have thought her idiotic. The day's pleasure was tarnished, and the street seemed more sordid than ever.

"I'm sorry I spoiled your bargaining," she said, as he shut the door of the car and folded the linen rug over her knees.

"We can go back there later. It will make our expedition the longer, and so give me added pleasure. It is a joy to find someone with enthusiasm." He smiled again that secret, Jewish smile. He had not thought her stupid, and immediately the squalor of the place disappeared and the people became picturesque. They turned a corner and came to an alley filled with shops. Great blue-and-white ginger-jars stood on shelves, and mysterious foods were spread on pottery dishes, where "Chiniese Restorant, Firs class quisine" hung over a door.

"Oh, how delicious!" she breathed. "I long to taste 'quisine.' Is it the Franco-Chinese for 'chop suey'?"

"You shall dine here with me one night, and we will eat sharks' fins and drink Ah Sing's incomparable liqueur."

"What an enticing m'n'u!" she said lightly. "Do we smoke opium for dessert?"

"No, it's a disappointing affair. There shall be no white poppy at the feast—except yourself."

Marvellous man, she thought, to have smoked opium and not liked it! It was perfect to be with him, perfect to be called a white poppy. Alec never said things like that, poor Alec!—going to the races like everyone else, betting, and looking through field-glasses at small, coloured specks flying round a track, whilst she came to Chinatown. . . .

Through her thoughts she heard Michael's deep, rather suave voice. "At night one has to come with a police escort; but in the daytime it is really quite safe, particularly if one knows the Chinese as I do. . . . We must go and drink tea with King Fu. Would that please you?"

There was nothing that she wanted to do more. They left the car, and walked down a street even narrower than the others, and through a low, arched door into a noiseless courtyard, filled with sheeted, sleeping figures which looked like corpses. It was very still inside the house, still with an ominous silence, and they stumbled up dark, worn steps to a balcony which ran round the four walls which surrounded the courtyard. At the head of the stairs they found a little sleeping boy, whom they woke and sent in search of King Fu. The balcony was horrible, bestrewn with cans of refuse, dying plants in pots, and the remnants of strange shellfish.

King Fu appeared, and greeted them with a pleasant, crinkled smile. He was an old man, with wayward grey moustachios and a coat of faded blue brocade. He beckoned them into his room, which was as clean as the balcony had been dirty. The matting was spotless, and the covers on the bed in the corner were of a surprising whiteness. She sat down on a little square stool and fingered a minute junk of carved agate, which lay on a table close to her, whilst King Fu conversed with Michael in a queer mixture of pigeon English, Chinese, and Hindustani.

[Continued overleaf.]

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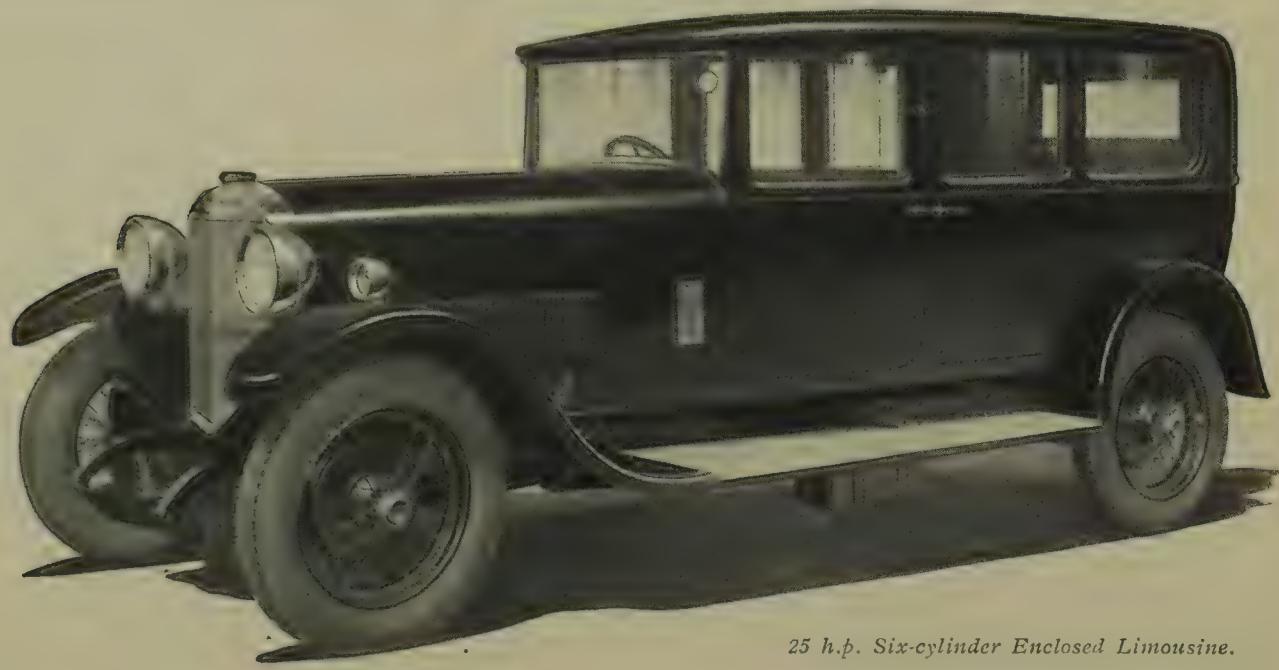
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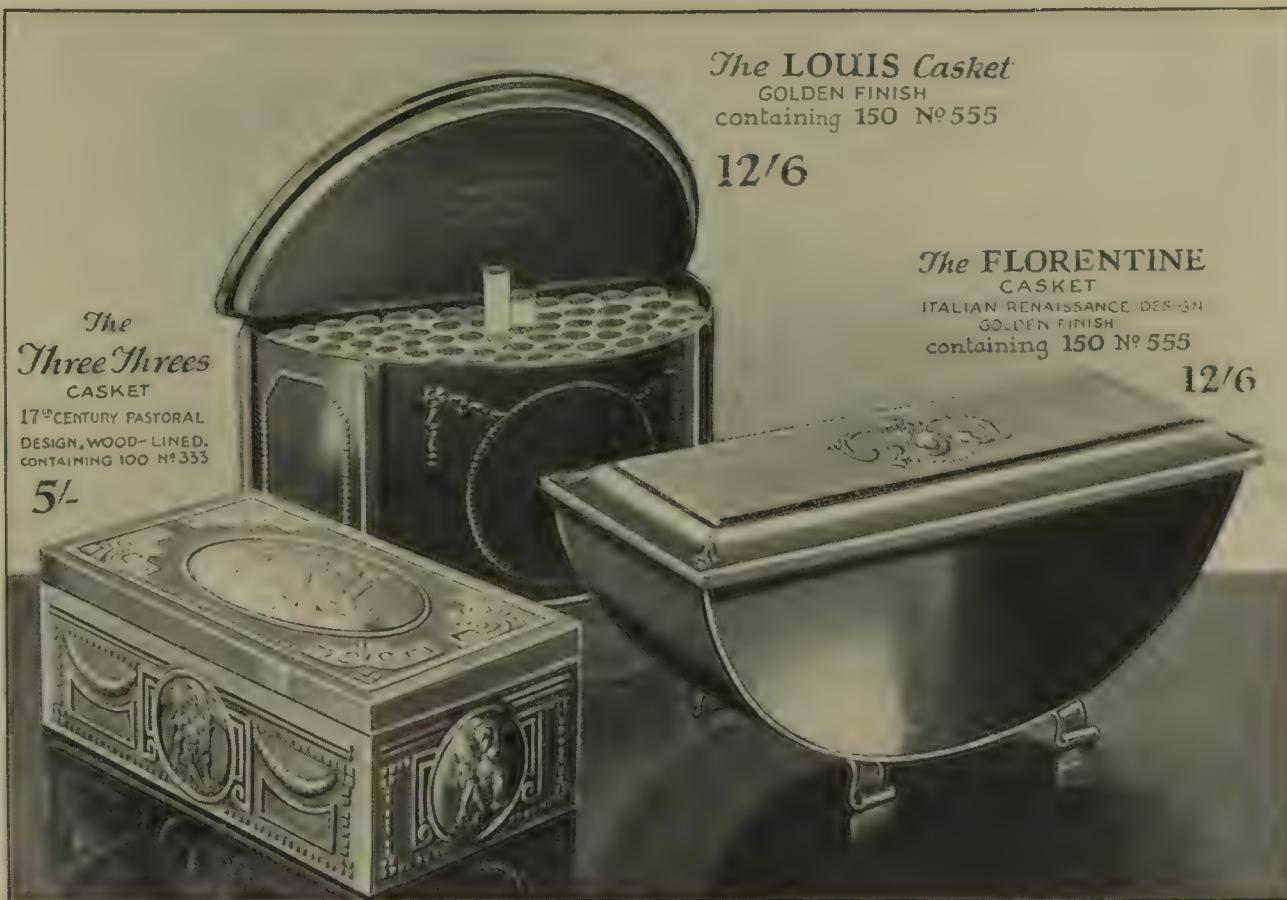
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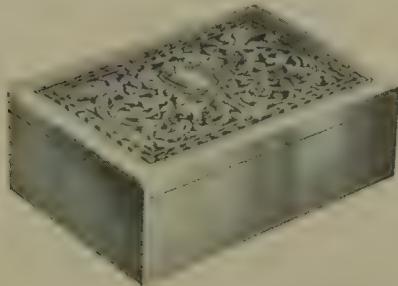
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Continued.

Michael turned towards her. He looked extraordinarily big in the small, cabin-like room, towering above the diminutive Chinaman. "King Fu is going to fetch us some silks, and give us some tea. You'd like that, wouldn't you? They have here such tea as one finds nowhere else, scented with jasmine and the colour of pale amber."

"I should love it," she answered, and leant back gracefully on her stool, so that he should understand that she was the least bit tired, and be sympathetic accordingly. He understood at once; in fact, so quickly that she caught herself wondering if his experience of women was very wide.

He drew up a stool and sat close to her. "Yes, this tea is the honey-dew of Paradise, and when you have drunk it you will never care for any other kind. To taste it is to be like the Pierrot of Versailles who loved a moon maiden, and afterwards could love no mortal woman. . . . But then . . . Pierrot never came to Calcutta, did he?"

There was a faint clashing outside the door, and King Fu brought in small porcelain bowls and filled them with the tea. It was, as Michael had said, nectar. . . . She had never tasted anything quite so delicious. Both its taste and its colour reminded her of that field flower, agrimony, with its warmed, aromatic scent and yellow petals. After one sip she felt different. It was as if the subtle, fragrant fluid had given her all its own qualities of rarity, had warmed her most delicate sensibilities, and had made her more acutely alive and more sensitive to everything around her.

How enchanting it all was!—the yellowed, crumpled face of King Fu, the smiling eyes of the little boy, the jewel-coloured cases on the walls, the shimmer of the mulberry and scarlet silks, and Michael's face as he watched her drape the pliant richness of the brocade. Jews were fascinating; there was no doubt of that. They seemed to understand everything, and yet hid themselves away in their own personalities, so that one was never quite certain of their thoughts.

The silks were perfect. She bought yards of stuff that was sunflower coloured, and a great square of blue, on which two dragons danced a slow, formal dance, waving their scaly bodies and pointing delicate silver claws. When she had chosen her stuffs, they were rolled in odd-smelling, soft paper and presented to her

by King Fu with a little solemn bow. "Now we will go upstairs. New vellee clever man come. You likee see?"

"Would you like to see the new man?" said Michael, as he took her parcel. "One never knows what one may find here. I think it may be worth our while to follow King Fu. I am never amazed by anything in Chinatown."

They climbed more stairs, and reached another balcony, where three Chinamen were cooking over a clay fireplace, and there were more amazing smells. A door stood open, and King Fu motioned them to go inside. On the threshold she hesitated as if spellbound, for the scene in the little room resembled an illustration to a fairy tale, and it was as if she had stepped into another world.

Crouching over a black wood table sat an old man. He was the colour of age-worn ivory and like some exquisitely carved netsuke; his face, under the shining dome of his head, was modelled with a thousand wrinkles. On the satin darkness of the table in front of him the sunshine, filtering through the slatted shutters, danced and shimmered on a pile of jewels; above these hovered his delicate, yellowed hands, which gathered up now turquoise for a flower, now jade for a leaf. They were hands as fine as a Durer engraving, and as sensitive as withering flowers.

Set before him, so that he could lift his eyes and gain from it inspiration, stood the crown of his craftsmanship, a little tree. Planted in a bowl of scarlet lacquer, its stem rose straight, but the branches, curving with such perfection of line as only a Chinaman could devise, were laden with flowers of turquoise, of pale shaded amethyst and warm cornelian, fantastic blossoms of transparent crystal and golden amber, all set amongst leaves of dark jade. Perfection bloomed in that little dark room, and she and Michael gazed at it silently. Then she lifted up a finger and very gently touched the topmost turquoise petal. It was hard and incredibly cold.

"It's beautiful," she breathed. "It's beautiful. I'd give anything in the world to possess it." She turned towards Michael eagerly. How well he would appreciate all that she felt, how perfectly he would share in her ecstasy of delight over this exquisite, this rare treasure!

"Oh, Michael!" she began, but the words she meant to say were never

[Continued overleaf.]

Hebridean Christmas Song.

Colour and sound have gone;
Gold and red of the hill
Blotted out by the snow,
And the melodious rill
Frozen, and still.

The heather's amethyst
And garnet ceased to shine.
Amorous roar of the stags
Silenced. Only the whine
Of wind over brine,

And the honking of geese.
Whence then this sudden mirth,
This invading sweetness?
Has every rose on earth
Warred against Winter's dearth?

Men loving and giving!
Giving without measure
Children mad with mirth.
But whence comes this pleasure
And sweet leisure?

From long ago.

A day
When angels sang a psalm
That echoes yet.

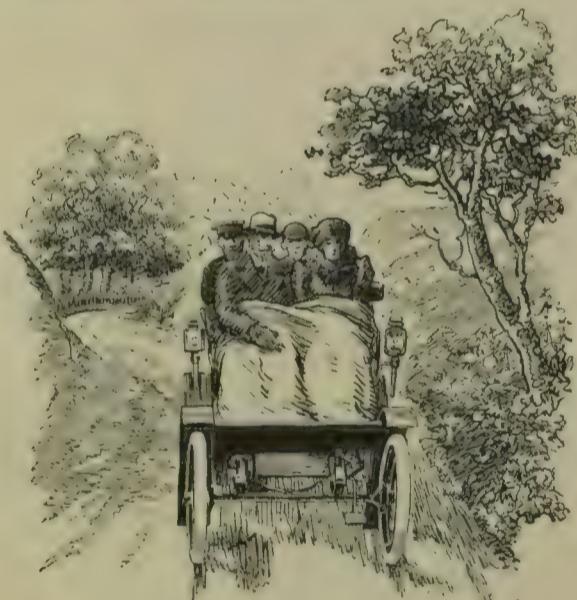
When Love
Came bringing summer's balm
Our storms to calm.

VIOLET CLIFTON OF LYTHAM.

he would appreciate all that she felt, how perfectly he would share in her ecstasy of delight over this exquisite, this rare treasure!

"Oh, Michael!" she began, but the words she meant to say were never

[Continued overleaf.]



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spoken. They were checked by a look in Michael's eyes which she had never seen before. For an instant he seemed not worshipping, but calculating: not the devotee of beauty gazing at a work of art, but rather the appraiser of its value.

"That's quite a modern piece," he said, turning to King Fu. "But I may buy it, if he doesn't want too much for it." Then he caught her arm. "Tu l'auras," he whispered, and smiled his dark, Jewish smile.

She moved away, ostensibly to look at a picture on the wall, but in reality because he had shocked her, jarred on her. Why had he suddenly used the "tu" of intimacy, and used it in such a fashion that vaguely it had displeased her? It was absurd of her to be so fastidious. King Fu was talking to the old man, and the syncopated rasp and chuckle of Chinese sounded between them, whilst Michael stood by, watching them closely. King Fu made a little ducking bow.

"Oll man, he say wellee sollee, little tlee belong him joss. No wanchee sell."

"That's absurd," Michael interrupted. "He's only holding out for more, because he sees we want it. . . . Kitna dam? How much?"

He looked at the tree disparagingly, and then stretched out his hand to pick it up to examine it more closely; but his hand remained suspended in mid-air, as the old man very gravely lifted up the scarlet pot in his frail hands and moved it out of Michael's reach. Then he turned with unhurrying dignity towards King Fu, and began to speak again. Watching him intently, she noticed in the rising cadences of his voice the intonation of a master speaking to an inferior, and she was suddenly struck by the difference between the manner of this old man and the subservience of the Indians with whom she came into daily contact.

"What is he saying, King Fu?" she asked.

The old man folded his hands inside his sleeves, and sat in impassive silence whilst King Fu interpreted. "Old man he say he no wanchee your money. Old man he say he pleased ladie likee little tlee. He say he Emperor's jewel man, and have much honour in Yamen. In China Padshah ke koti. . . .

He makee little tlee for temple. . . . He say little tlee belongee in temple of god allec same know evenly thing."

"Kong Fu Si, the God of Wisdom," she murmured, with memories of Kai Lung still in her mind. The old man caught the sound of familiar syllables, and nodded his head, smiling at her benignly, and spoke again to King Fu.

"Old man he say this vellee wise ladie. . . . Old man he say he save little tlee when foleign soldiers come . . . foleign soldiers allec same devil men, blake allec fine things in palace. . . . He fightee for Emperor. Foleign soldiers wanchee makee die, so he makee hide in tea junk. . . . India vellee bad place. . . . When he makee die then he go back China. Will makee show ladie lacquer coffin. . . ." King Fu waved his hand towards a dark shape covered in cloth which stood at the back of the room.

Michael tapped his foot impatiently on the floor. "All this yarn is curio-dealer's patter, and has been made up to enhance the price."

"No, Michael," she said, queerly hurt by his disbelief. "I'm quite sure it's all true. You've only to look at the old man's face to see that. What an amazing life he must have had! A refugee Boxer, carrying with him the greatest triumph of his craftsmanship. I'm not surprised that he won't sell the 'little tlee.' But I'm disappointed. I should have loved it so much. It's a perfect treasure."

She touched one of the delicate flowers, and this time the old man made no attempt to move it out of her reach, as he had done when Michael tried to touch it. He only nodded his old head gravely whilst King Fu evidently translated what she had just said to Michael.

"Don't be disappointed yet, dear lady. Of course, you'll have it. Money always has the last word where human nature is concerned." He drew a roll of notes from his pocket, and began to count them rather ostentatiously.

The "dear lady" jarred almost as much as the "tu," but she walked away quickly from the table, and stared out of the small, square window on to the roof-tops below. . . . But even so, she could not avoid hearing the discussion in the room behind her.

[Continued overleaf.]



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12/6



13/6

Continued.

"I'll give him fifty rupees," said Michael.

"No wanchee sell," King Fu laughed politely.

"Fifty-five rupees." Michael increased the bid acidly.

"No wanchee sell."

"Sixty."

Suddenly there flashed through her mind the memory of the Pathan, the Pathan who would have bidden up five cows for her, all that he had, and now Michael, with his thousands, was haggling, a mite at a time, for a gift which he knew she desired more than anything. . . . Was it typical? "Only a Pathan in a frock coat," Alec had said, and suddenly, horribly, she realised he was right. But then the Pathan without the frock coat was the better man.

"Sixty-five . . ."

"Old man no wanchee sell."

She turned round quickly. She felt she could not bear to listen to the bargaining an instant longer. But before she could say anything, the old man had climbed disdainfully off his stool, and walked out of the room, saying something in Chinese as he went. King Fu waved distressed yellow hands.

"Old man vellee sollee you no makee understand. He say he no bunnia, but allee same sahib. Long ago he mandalin, having muchee placee honour in China."

"It doesn't matter anyway, Michael," she said coldly. "I couldn't accept it from you."

"But, dearest lady . . ." he began.

Why did he call her that? Irritated and disillusioned beyond measure, she was just going to answer him, when the door opened and the old man returned. He had taken off his faded linen coat, and dressed himself in an embroidered robe of ceremony. The rainbow colours were frayed and lustreless, but the folds of rich silk swept to the ground, and the necklace of amber and jade clashed as he walked.

He strode past Michael, not even deigning to glance at him, and, taking the lacquer pot between his hands, he came to where she stood by the window. The leaves and flowers of the little tree shone in the gliding sunshine, and the strong light revealed the seamed wrinkles in the old face and hands. Standing there in his frayed and splendid robes, he had a kind of pitiful dignity which caught at her heart-strings. He spoke in Chinese, a long, winding sentence, and placed the little tree in her hands, making the formal bow of presentation.

"Old man he say you makee allee same treasure," said King Fu, edging nearer to them, whilst Michael watched them from the back of the room. "He say you keep, allee same ancestor. . . . He vellee old man, go makee die soon . . . so give you one piecee tee. Little tee bring knowledge good things, bad things, you muchee want. . . . Little tee allee same blessing. . . . But you never makee sell. What he once give to a king no can sell. . . ."

Sell it! As if she would ever sell anything as lovely as that! She was overwhelmed with delight, and could only stammer out words of thanks, and beg King Fu to tell the old man how touched and enchanted she was by his gift. "Tell him I shall keep it always, and that it will have the place of honour in my house. . . . Tell him I have never wanted anything so much . . . that if we have children, they shall treasure it too."

"Old man he say he savee that. He vellee pleased."

The frail yellow hands wrapped the tree in a square of Imperial silk and placed it in a black lacquer box, tied with red cord. When all was ready, Michael stepped forward to take the parcel, but, ignoring him, the old man gave it to her, and with another bow they were ushered out of the room by King Fu.

Michael shrugged his shoulders. "Quels drôles de gens . . . c'est gratis. Dieu sait pourquoi."

"I think He does," she answered gravely. "Chinese gods are very wise." And she hurried down the dark stairs before Michael could take her arm, or offer to carry the tree. They got into the car and drove away.

"Well, did you enjoy it?" he asked.

"Yes, it was a revelation."

"I told you that one never knew what one would find in Chinatown. It was amazing luck, getting that piece for nothing. But quite as it should be. The two most perfect things in this city should belong to one another."

She smiled rather wanly at the compliment. It was another discord. And he, thinking she must be tired, was silent for the rest of the drive. The streets were hot, and humanity seemed very ugly. She felt at the same time disillusioned and comforted, and she longed more than anything else to be alone with the little tree. On the steps of her house she said good-bye to Michael, and thanked him.

"When shall I see you again?" he called after her.

"I'm rather busy. I'll let you know."

Poor Michael, how different he had seemed! From the moment when they entered the craftsman's room she had seen him with new eyes. Perhaps the little tree was enchanted. The whole adventure might have come straight out of a fairy-tale—the enchanted tree, which makes people appear as they really are, she mused, as she walked into the twilight of the house.

She carried the lacquer box into her drawing-room and put it down on a mahogany table, standing framed in an alcove. She undid the red cords slowly, and then unwound the yellow silk, which she laid like a little sunset island on the lake of polished wood. Then, reverently, as if it were part of a ritual, she planted the tree on the island. Its fantastic flowers were reflected in the polished wood, and a gust of wind blowing through the door made its leaves of jade rustle and tinkle together, like those crystal bells which the devout hang outside the temples in China to keep away evil spirits.

She looked at the little tree for one long minute, then she leant forward and lightly kissed the topmost turquoise petal. "Oh, you lovely, lovely thing!" she whispered.

Alec stood in the doorway. He had come in quietly, and was watching her, unseen. How young she was, he thought, how childish, and how pretty! It was no marvel that she found the days long and empty. . . . The little tree.

"Did an old Chinaman give you that?" he asked her softly. "I tried to buy it for you once, but he would not take my offer. I thought then that it was beautiful. . . . If he gave it to you it should bring us luck."

"He did . . . and it has," she said tenderly.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil!

[THE END.]

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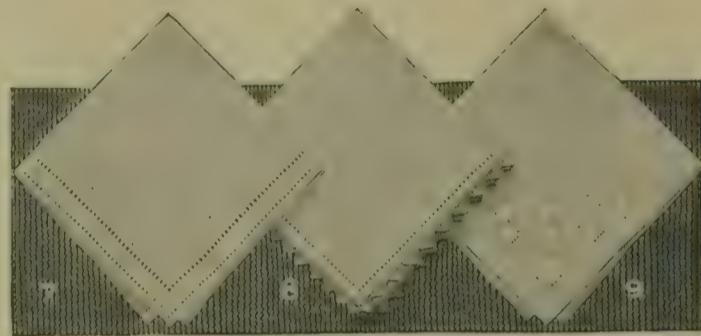
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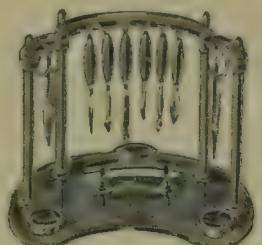
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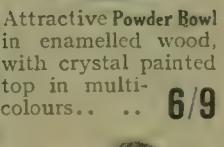
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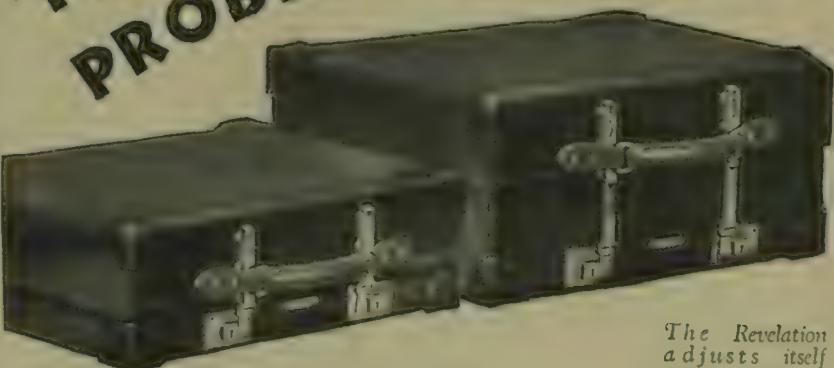
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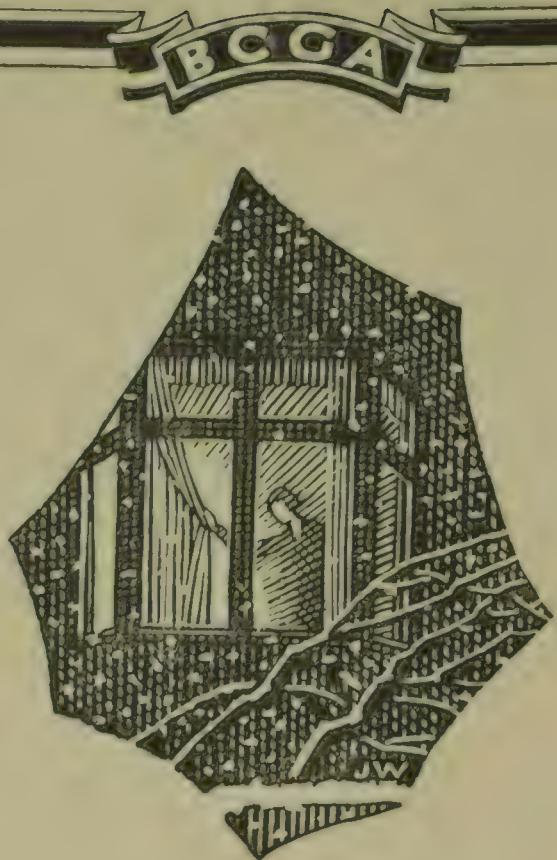


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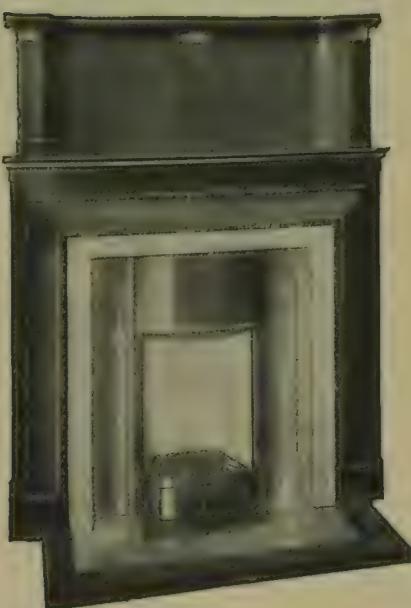
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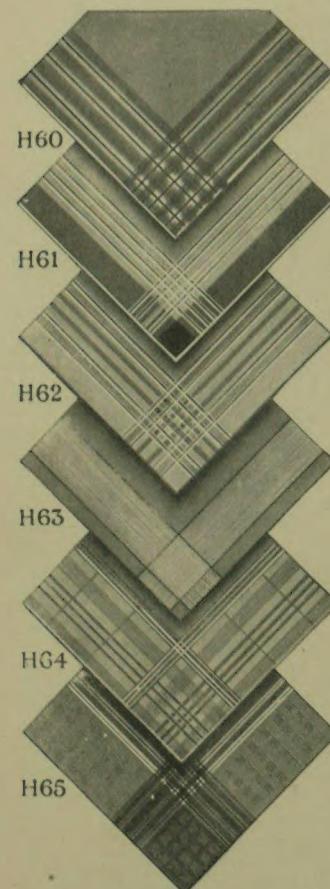
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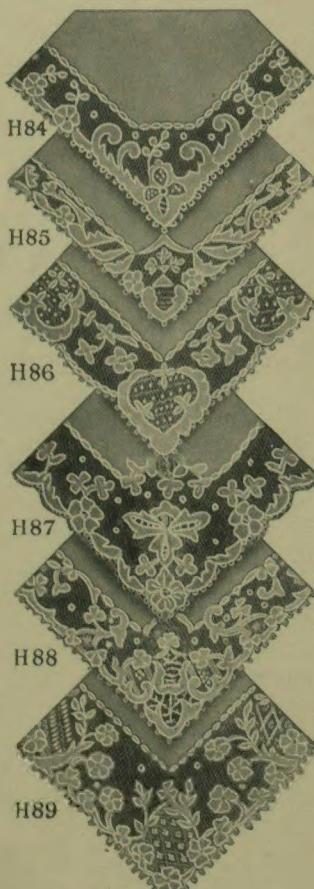
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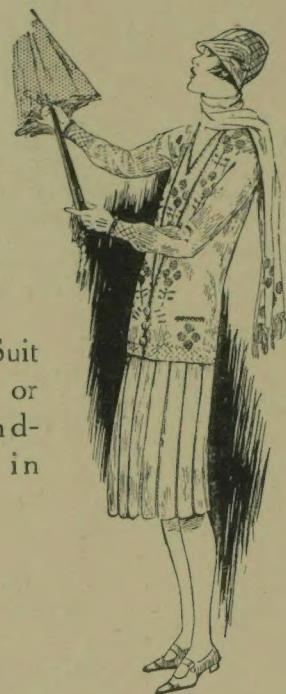
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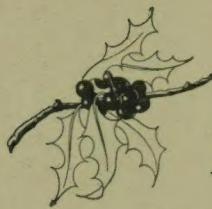


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